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EDITH M. THOMAS
AT TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS

Selected Poems

of

Edith M. Thomas

Edited with a Memoir by
Jessie B. Rittenhouse

New York and London
Harper & Brothers Publishers
MCMXXVI

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SELECTED POEMS OF EDITH M. THOMAS
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H-A

Psyche's Lamp

In Memory of Edith M. Thomas

Exquisite spirit, rudely caught and tangled
In brazen spheres that jangled;
A skylark with bruised wings and clear song strangled.

Sad-hearted day by day
She went her lone, brave way.
Within that wave-worn wraith
Of small and beaten faith
A flame forever glimmered through the damp,
But it was Psyche's lamp—
Her searing lamp turned on divinest things
Until they spread their bright departing wings.

She could not drink the waters of sweet springs
As a child quaffs their crystalline delight;
With reason as a knife
She slit the veils of life.

Bereft and stricken in grief's last repining,
She dwelt too near the stars to see their shining.
But in some trancèd dreaming of the night
Her soul rose winged and white,
And throbbed with melody as the first star.

Fine in her discontent
Of things that are,
She scorned her cerement—
The silvery bell
That was her own thin shell;
And trusted tremblingly in the surprise
Of hearing, seeing, without ears or eyes.
"I hate this ashen cloud about my head,
Of raven, once," she said.

Psyche's Lamp

(Proud, lowly head that wore a violet crown,
Dropping shrunk petals if the singer bowed,
Or hurried through the windy, clattering crowd,
Cloaked in her viewless purple of renown.)

The radiant dust of Hellas was her own,
And tones from that far zone
She wooed to her unlistening midland town.
Poor starry head, unwillingly dragged down
    To that dry earth
    That claimed in death and birth!
I cannot see it there, but lifted high
As when, against the sky,
With one shy hand arrested on her lip,
She let her gay smile slip
And follow me far down the drowning street.

When the sharp tempests beat,
We will remember her and hear her sing:
"I shall step lightly forth to meet the spring . . ."
Flooded with love her airy world is ringing;
For hear! above the clouds a skylark singing.

ADA ALDEN

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Edith M. Thomas

A Memoir

Edith M. Thomas

1854–1925

"A fragile woman with shadows under her eyes and ghosts looking out of them," says the New York *Mail and Express* in an issue of the late '80's, "attracted some little attention standing in front of a florist's window a day or two since. None of the passers had ever seen quite such an embodiment of the pallid, the wistful, the spirituelle. Everybody turned to look a second time at the large eyes, the sad curves of the face, the melancholy mouth. The woman was beautiful. No one recognized the quiet figure, but it was that of a writer whose name is signed to some of the strongest verse of the day—Edith Thomas, who has recently come to New York to make this city her permanent home."

That one's presence should affect the passer-by and the daily press take account of it, would seem a matter for remark, nor will it be understood in a period when poetry has gone through an elaborate system of exploitation, that a shy young woman could come from Ohio and conquer a city, yet this is exactly what Edith Thomas did, and not one of our contemporary poets has received more widespread recognition than was given her at the outset of her career purely on the strength of her art, her personality, and her spirit.

She to whom little of outward incident happened, whose life was a passage not between two infinities, but through infinity, burned to the end with a flame too intense for

the flesh, so that one who came into her presence was conscious only of a spirit which had transcended the physical and would eventually consume it. No such immediacy of contact belonged to any other person, no such ardor, such inner vitality shining through an almost spent body.

To those who associate her particularly with the years which brought the gifts of sorrow, it will be a gratification to know that life was lavish at the outset with what it later gave so charily.

The story of her romantic entry into the field of poetry has been told many times, but a generation has arisen to whom yesterday's tales are new and who may be interested in the manner of her emergence from the circumscribing life of a little Ohio town. While it would seem that the great cultivated state of Ohio would be an advantageous place in which to foster a talent, in the childhood of Miss Thomas it was still remote and alien, on the borderland of that "West" to which Manhattan turned almost fearful eyes. It was, indeed, not far removed from its designation as the "Western Reserve," to which Miss Thomas's forbears, New England Puritans, had migrated and which they had borne their part in developing. Her father's family was originally Welsh—hardy stock assimilating well the New England ideals—and her mother a native of Connecticut, so that on both sides she inherited that strict, clear-thinking, uncompromising spirit, that strain, no doubt, of the Puritan, which by a natural evolution found its own atmosphere, its upland air, in the high rectitudes of Greek thought.

While the family of her father had been active in the pioneer life of Ohio, by the time he himself came upon the scene this epoch had passed and he embraced the career of a teacher, living successively at Chatham, where Edith Thomas was born, at Bowling Green, and at Kenton, where he died in 1861 while still a young man. The child, Edith, was then but seven years old and the mother decided to take up her home in the larger town of Geneva, which offered better advantages for bringing up her two children.

In this town, then, situated picturesquely near Lake Erie, Edith Thomas spent her girlhood, and here, in 1872, she graduated from the old Normal Institute, having succeeded in getting a class in Greek organized for her especial benefit and having pursued the subject with such zestful joy that she emerged from it equipped with the keys which were to unlock her particular gates of magic.

A short period at Oberlin followed, but for some reason she did not find herself in sympathy with the atmosphere of the college, probably because her own gifts were already calling for expression. She was in the period of unrest, the pain of half-realized genius, living with the gods and troubled by the ineptitude of mortals. Probably the result would have been the same wherever she had gone, but, in any event, she left Oberlin at the end of a term and struck out in her own paths.

Perhaps the one fruit of Oberlin was a friend, one who was in close association with her to the end of her life, and to this friend the young poet wrote, on the eve of her twentieth birthday, a letter which would be amusing were

it not so full of prophetic intimations. It reminds one of the youthful letters which Coleridge wrote to Tom Poole, so heavily do twenty years sit upon the shoulders!

"Your birthday," she says to her friend, "is past; mine is in the near future. The years of my pilgrimage will then be one score. I wonder if, in truth, you feel ancient of days as I do? I think I never was young, and if I had not dreamt dreams and owned castles in Spain I should say I had had no youth. From nineteen to twenty is a long transition. Whether you wrote *au serieux* or not, I can hardly determine, but I write with the utmost solemnity. My birthdays are the most melancholy days I know. I spend them in sackcloth and ashes, in taking gloomy retrospects and in making despairful prophecies of the future. Last year on my nineteenth birthday I was voyaging and some way it seemed as if that year was drowned, at least I did not realize it with as profound misery as is usually my wont. . . . What are the signs of the times in Oberlin?—for I would know what is going on in the higher latitudes of civilization and refinement. I think in the *dolce far niente* you will have much to tell me of what has happened and will be happening in the final weeks of your school life. We will

> 'live and lie reclined
> On the hills like gods together, careless of mankind.'

Hopeless visionary, am I not? A sort of come-to-naught, of which sort the world is over-full. Do I not sometimes wish I was practical and present-minded like the body of my fellow-citizens to whom I am odd, or affected, or *non compos mentis*, or at least enigmatical?

"My uncle has been here. He gave me thirty-five or forty volumes. Will I not tempt you with my books, I wonder? There are French works, some Spanish, and some in mother tongue. Great are my riches. I can read without coming to a famine all summer long. The same munificent donor has made me the happy proprietor of a portfolio of old engravings collected in Paris."

It was, indeed, this "munificent donor" to whom Edith Thomas owed the gift which focused her groping powers and showed her for what she was intended—the gift of the poetry of Keats! Already she had been made free of the same enchanted world, as romance, as symbol, but not as art. Here were those three degrees of beauty through which the soul must pass and which the artist must interpret in his creation: the "Endymion" stage, joyous, sensuous physical life, the objective world of nature and man, crystallized in the line,

> "A thing of beauty is a joy forever;"

the "Hyperion" stage, intellectual and spiritual beauty prevailing over the physical, Apollo conquering the Titans,

> "For 'tis the eternal law
> That first in beauty shall be first in might;"

and the stage of "The Grecian Urn" with its supreme dictum,

> "Beauty is Truth—Truth, Beauty."

Within these three lay all philosophies, all meanings which could trouble the brain of so young a questioner, and

within them lay the release to the pent-up, seeking spirit, the release, indeed, of the poet.

She who was later to write some of the most perfect sonnets connected with the name of Keats, became the disciple whom a poet should draw, one whose inspiration derives from him but becomes immediately creative in its own right. Even the earliest of her work shows no imitation of Keats, no use of his specific themes, merely the same passion for Greek myth and an even keener feeling for its significance. Whereas Keats, having so few years in which to savor life, had not yet lost the sense of its ecstasy and approached Greek themes with a pagan joy, Edith Thomas had as a native gift the brooding soul and was drawn to Greek legend not because it contained the magic inherent in the youth of the world, however sensitive she was to it, but because life had yielded its meaning to the Greek more profoundly than to others and all this magic was a vast symbol for her deciphering.

Even in the lightest and most joyous work of her youth there is always that undertone or overtone, that sense of the beyond, which was to lift it as she became the master of her instrument, to high poetry. If the poet is to be the Answerer, as Whitman said, he must first be the Questioner, and only by long interrogation does he become fit to speak the authentic word.

In sharp contrast to the mood which prevails to-day, wherein the poet would exhibit his craftsmanship and discuss with partisan warmth the manner of his saying and not the matter—Edith Thomas with all the dedication of a devotee, with reverence toward the gods, or

the God, inspiring her, became from the outset all poet, all seeker, all instrument for the beauty which she strove to apprehend, and so, by natural right, her utterance became beautiful and it was not long before her work began to show the finality of art.

Her first efforts found lodgment in the papers of her own state, particularly in the Cleveland *Leader* and *Herald*, and one rural editor immortalized himself by declaring that she was "the best amateur poet in northern Ohio!"

During this time she went through the usual efforts for a livelihood, teaching, then learning type-setting, but all the while living with the great poets and reading the great books until she was scarcely conscious of the life about her. Youth creates its own world and particularly does genius so create it, needing the isolation, the solitude, for such creation, and perhaps these years in Ohio were more important to Edith Thomas, however barren they may have seemed to her, than any later period.

They were relieved on the human side by the close sympathy between herself and her mother and by a youthful hero-worship — which never waned — for an uncle, her father's brother, James Thomas, who was instrumental in doing more to aid and inspire her than any other person. This man, still young during Miss Thomas's own youth, was the embodiment of all that was romantic and adventurous. Attracted to California in his boyhood, with the gold seekers, he had made a considerable fortune and had become a boon companion of Joaquin Miller and others of the San Francisco group,

but especially had he fallen under the spell of Walker of Stockton who later led the famous filibustering expedition to Nicaragua, that Walker whom Joaquin Miller so gallantly defends in his well-known poem. Indeed her uncle threw in his fortune with Walker and went with him to Nicaragua, which he later made his home, returning now and then to the States and keeping a certain paternal care over Edith Thomas and her sister. Coming back to Ohio on one of these visits, after a prolonged absence, he found the niece to whom he had given the books and in whose intellectual life he had borne such a part, already making herself known as a poet and realized that she should have a broader field for her talents.

It was he who took her to New York on that first and most momentous visit in the early '80's, and he who introduced her to Mrs. Vincenzo Botta and others of his friends then important in the life of the metropolis. Mrs. Botta, a well-known hostess of the time, in whose drawing-room, years before, Poe had given his first reading of "The Raven" and who had herself been somewhat of a figure in the verse of an earlier day,—was not slow to recognize the talent of Edith Thomas, and casting about for the most practical thing she could do for her, sent her with a letter of introduction to her friend Helen Hunt Jackson—"H. H."—then at the height of her popularity.

Mrs. Jackson, being a busy writer and a woman of affairs, was not particularly keen about being interrupted by Mrs. Botta's protégée whom she judged to be the usual poetic aspirant, and it was not with the greatest enthusiasm that she told the hall-boy of the old Brevoort

House, where she was then living, to show the visitor up.

"I shall not forget the appearance of the girl as she stood before me that morning," said Mrs. Jackson in speaking of the interview. "It was pouring rain outside, and she had on a long waterproof cloak, carried her dripping umbrella and her scrap-book under her arm. She stood most modestly at my door before coming in, and even after being seated seemed to be more or less embarrassed and said nothing to show that she was in any way above the average young woman with a manuscript in her hand. She told me that she wanted to write, that she had written a few things, and I encouraged her in a mild sort of way. Indeed, I was almost patronizing. I told her that literature was a thorny and often ungrateful road to travel and tried rather to discourage her than otherwise.

"When she rose to go she laid her scrap-book on the table and said she would leave it for me to look over if I would be so kind. I replied, 'Certainly, with great pleasure,' but in a rather perfunctory way, and she bowed herself out. I had much to do that day and forgot all about the scrap-book until some time after dinner, when I happened to notice it, and taking it up with a sort of desperate feeling, sat down by the fire and began to read. I had not gone far before I realized that here was a prize, and I did not retire that night until I had finished every word that was pasted in the book. Here was a poet such as we had not heard sing in years. I could hardly wait for morning to carry the scrap-book to the editor of *Scribner's Monthly* and tell him what I had found."

In the sketch taken from the Philadelphia *Press* of 1885, from which the foregoing is copied, the writer adds, "One of the editors of *Scribner's* here takes up the tale and relates how, bright and early one morning, Mrs. Jackson called at his office and with an air of triumph laid a well-worn scrap-book upon his desk. 'This,' said she, 'is something for you to read. See what you think of the verses in that book, and let me know if I have not discovered a poet for you,' and with that she left the office beaming with benevolence and enthusiastic conviction. The editor read the verses and hurried into the next room to show them to Dr. Holland. Then, says the chronicle, the two editors got up, shook hands with each other, and congratulated themselves upon the discovery of a genuine poet."

Since J. G. Holland was at that time editor of *Scribner's Monthly* and Richard Watson Gilder his associate, it follows that it must have been Mr. Gilder who carried the verses to Dr. Holland. At any rate, their enthusiasm took both a practical and an unprecedented form — they decided to publish in the magazine a page of poems selected from the scrap-book and so launch the young Western poet as no Easterner had yet been launched.

It chanced that this was the year — 1881 — in which after some publishing difficulties and readjustments, the *Century Magazine* emerged from the former *Scribner's*, and so when Miss Thomas's poems appeared in June of that year it was the *Century* rather than *Scribner's* which introduced her, the same editors having founded the new magazine.

So great a sensation did the poems cause, together with the dramatic effect of their presentation, that ere long editors of Eastern magazines began to vie with one another for her work and a controversy arose among them as to which had the rightful honor of having first published work submitted directly by her.

Joseph B. Gilder, in an appreciative sketch of Miss Thomas which appeared soon after her death, speaks of a rival claim between *The Critic* and the *Atlantic Monthly* for this honor, and says, "I still have in my possession a letter written by Thomas Bailey Aldrich over forty years ago to ask the exact date of publication of *The Critic* containing Miss Thomas's essay, as he hoped to prove (and did so) that the *Atlantic* had printed one of her poems still earlier."

Not only her work, but her personality came in for its share of attention: "The poet has one of the most striking faces ever bestowed upon a woman," says a writer in the *Graphic*. "It is not beautiful, nor would one call it handsome, but it is what is far more fortunate for its possessor—radiant in its refined intelligence." The same writer adds, "None among our women poets finds it so easy to obtain access to the pages of the best magazines and I have known a single editor of one of our monthlies to purchase her work when he already had enough in manuscript to represent her in every number for a year."

While Miss Thomas spent much of her time in New York during the years immediately succeeding her entry into the field of poetry, she did not definitely give up her residence in Ohio until after the death of her mother, in

1887, and spent the last year or two of the latter's life nursing her with great tenderness. When this tie to her early home was gone, she returned to New York, for which no native born had more enduring love, and never thereafter left it save for brief visits or an occasional trip abroad. When asked by a friend what she lacked in the old home in Ohio that she could be induced to leave it, she replied, laconically, "Salt!" Existence there had no savor. She must have the tang, the pungency of living. The pulse-beat of the great city thrilled her, its concentrated life held her so that she had no desire to leave it nor to quit the struggle of which she became so complete a part. To the end it was difficult to lure her from New York, as if she cherished jealously the days in which she could walk its streets and feel herself a part of its destiny. Only Charles Lamb at Enfield, pining for London and its perpetual faces, had, perhaps, the nostalgia which beset Edith Thomas whenever she was absent from New York:

"For here was I reborn,"

she says, and rebirth of the spirit is more vital than birth of the body in which one has no conscious part. Edith Thomas was born to intensive living and it is doubtful if she would ever have externalized her life in events even had circumstances given her the freedom for such action. Rarely, if ever, have I known a nature so emotionally responsive, one that felt with such painful or joyous keenness the experience through which it had passed.

I well recall an evening in her little up-town apartment when she told me with much detail the story of her uncle's life, of his inspiring effect upon her youth, of his dramatic career in Nicaragua, and lastly of his death there, when he kept calling her name and giving to his Spanish wife messages in the English tongue which she could not interpret. That he should have met the final hour remote from his family and country, and she could never know his dying wish, was still so fresh a wound with Miss Thomas, although nearly twenty years had elapsed, that her grief was as keen as if it were yesterday. I knew then why her work in recent years had so departed from its earlier classic manner. Life had given her the stuff of poetry, had brought too much, indeed, to one who felt so intensely and retained so long the searing impression of events.

In her early years in New York she had no editorial connections, but had such wide outlet for her work that it gave her a sufficient maintenance. In one of the interviews of that period she said that she had then ample requests from editors to keep her busy for two years. Not that she wrote to order nor took commissions for specific poems. On the contrary, this was the time of her most classic work, the years in which her finest verse turned largely upon themes least likely to be salable from a commercial standpoint; but her poems appeared only in magazines whose standards admitted of such themes, magazines seeking what was highest in literature.

Unlike the poet of to-day, she was not eager to see her work between covers, and waited four years before

bringing out her first volume, *A New Year's Masque*. The result was that from one end of the country to the other the book was acclaimed as one of the most distinguished volumes which had appeared in years, and reading now those intelligent and discerning reviews, with their able, poised, and discriminating comment, one wonders what has happened to modern criticism. The reviewer of that day knew literature, knew backgrounds, had standards of comparison, was without partisanship, and alert to what was fine wherever encountered. Miss Thomas was happy in the time which fostered her, in the atmosphere in which her early work was done.

A few years after coming to New York she formed what was perhaps her most congenial and fortunate friendship, that with Dr. Samuel Elliott and his wife. Dr. Elliott was a personality in the life of the day, a man of such varied culture and gifts that one has only to mention his name to a New Yorker of the period to learn what a comrade he must have been. His offices were in Waverley Place, in the old University Building, and embraced a suite of living apartments where the family (whose home was upon Staten Island) might make a convenient tarry if anything especially inviting was on at the theater or among friends.

Dr. Elliott, after graduation at Columbia and the old New York Medical College, had been sent to Heidelberg and Paris for special work in his profession, but both in Germany and France carried on side by side with medicine the study of music and made such a mark at the Paris Conservatory that he was asked to play before the

Empress Eugénie. He knew well the Paris of the Second Empire and of Victor Hugo, Beranger, de Musset. Still in his early youth, he knew the Bohemia of which du Maurier was to be the historian. In Florence at a later date he was much at Casa Guida with the Brownings; in brief, he had been from his youth a man of the widest contacts, and as a conversationalist, wit, and raconteur was unrivaled. His quarters in Waverley Place became the rendezvous of a special group including Charles A. Dana, William Winter, Parke Godwin, Elihu Vedder, and Edwin Booth. This is to show the manner of man into whose family life Edith Thomas was admitted and with whom she spent more than a decade of her happiest years.

In addition to being a scientist and musician, Dr. Elliott was also a writer whose pungent essays appeared in the *Atlantic*, *Harper's Weekly* and other periodicals, but more valuable than all to Edith Thomas was his appreciation of poetry, of which he had at command the best in several literatures, while his keen admiration of her work and unerring taste as a critic could not but afford her the ideal atmosphere for production.

Born inland, Miss Thomas had a passion for the sea, literally as well as figuratively desiring the "salt" which she had lacked in her youthful environment. Her windows in the Elliott house upon Staten Island looked out upon the Kill von Kull, the eddying tides, the wheeling sea-gulls, and a continuous procession of shipping from all parts of the world. In summer the family was domiciled at New London, in "Stone Cottage," another home

of the Elliotts', so that neither in summer nor in winter was she out of sight and sound of the sea.

More important to her, however, were the seasons on the Island, as the residence of the Elliotts' was the rallying-place not only of the colony of writers of the vicinity, of which George William Curtis was for years the head, but of a literary coterie from New York.

Edwin Markham, an Island dweller and a frequenter of this inspiring household, declares: "The evenings at Dr. Elliott's were like a gathering on Helicon—talking of all high concerns of the Muses. Never did Edith Thomas appear so vibrant and charming as in those years at the hospitable Elliott house"; and Mrs. Markham adds, "I never knew a home where there was more of mirth and gay repartee." One delights to dwell upon these days since the later ones brought so much that was sad and inhibiting. With the Elliotts she made her first trip abroad, and in general one may say that this was the period of her happiest flowering.

In New York Miss Thomas numbered among her close friends the choicest spirits of the time, from Richard Henry Stoddard, who had hailed her at the outset as "a sister to Keats," to Howells, Stedman, and in particular the Gilders, at whose Friday nights in the famous "Studio" she was a familiar figure. I shall never forget her face at the funeral of Richard Watson Gilder and those great eyes with their haunting memories.

With Robert Underwood Johnson, the only survivor of the group and always one of her most sympathetic appreciators, she had also a close friendship dating from

the historic morning when "H. H." first brought her work to *Scribner's*, as Mr. Johnson was then associated with Dr. Holland and Mr. Gilder on that magazine and accompanied them in the new venture. He was, indeed, one of the first to suggest, as he says in *Remembered Yesterdays*, that her work be reprinted in one of the early issues of *The Century*.

During the years in which Miss Thomas remained with the Elliotts she worked for a time on the Century Dictionary, and finally, an advantageous opening occurring at *Harper's*, became a member of the staff of that magazine, a position which she occupied until her death. Here her desk was in a corner of the old editorial room in the Franklin Square building, almost under the Elevated tracks where cars were passing momentarily with their deafening roar. To all this Miss Thomas was oblivious and assured me that the Elevated was her private studio where she wrote most of her poems, going back and forth morning and evening. "Evoe," in particular, she spoke of as having been written as she made this pilgrimage. One may say that her life henceforth was bounded by two H's—Harper's and Harlem, as she left the Island three years after the death of Dr. Elliott—a farewell commemorated in her poem, "The House"—and established herself in a little apartment below Morningside Park.

At Harper's, almost within speaking distance of her desk, was the benign and beautiful presence of Henry Mills Alden in his "scholar's den" looking out also on the Elevated, to which he was even more oblivious, keeping, as he did, the inner calm:

"For you who taught how one may quiet keep
Amid inclement and divisive years,"

says Miss Thomas, who knew so well that he was "brooding transcendent things." What association could have been rarer for one of such sensitive understanding as Edith Thomas than that of long years with such a spirit as Henry Mills Alden! At the end of her poem, "The Master and the Butterfly," she writes of him:

"At length you came no more among us, yet
Felt presence were you still. I dreamed of you
With face of rosy freshness, silver set,
You bent to read, your keen eyes veiled from view
You read your book — you paused — your soul wrote books!
Familiar was the scene . . . and yet, not quite —
There was a window where no window looks
And down its length on you poured wondrous light!
I deemed the reading of this dream I knew,
That Thought like yours could in unbroken wall
A crystal set, where inner light looked through;
But, oh, I did not know its reading all,
And only know it now when you are hence,
And no charmed window hath its evidence."

The same perfect understanding which Miss Thomas showed toward Mr. Alden was shown by him toward her, and by Mrs. Alden, as her poem prefacing this volume will attest. It is much that through seventeen years of her life — as she was at her desk until two days before her death — she should have had such sympathetic association not only with Mr. Alden and his successors, but with all others connected with the editorial department of the House of Harper.

About 1912, if I remember correctly, when Miss Thomas returned from Staten Island and established herself in a little apartment on the corner of Manhattan Avenue and 120th Street, it chanced that my own apartment was upon the hill directly above hers, and as her rooms were in a projection of the building one could readily see when the lights were burning in her tower, the signal lights, as they became to me. It was a pleasant walk through the park guided by this beacon, knowing that at the end one would find oneself in so rare a presence.

It has been my happy fortune to know many poets, but none who so wholly fulfilled the high meaning of the word as did Edith Thomas. Her eyes had pierced infinities, yet none was more sensitive to the world about her. All fine natures feel the disparity between the spiritual vision and human experience, but it was not a sense of this disparity of which one was conscious in Edith Thomas, but something more personal, an almost poignant seeking, a reaching out for the more perfect fulfillments of life. Her capacity for feeling was too great. She could love too well and sorrow too keenly. She cherished her relationships even with friends in foreign countries whom she saw but a few times in life, with greater constancy and affection than most bestow upon the nearest, while for the nearest she was bought and sold, no sacrifice being too great.

Above all, however, she was more keenly aware of life and more sensitive to beauty than others. Hours spent with her were memorable through years. In discussing poetry or another art, she would make some comment

of such exquisite finality as to leave one in despair that he could not remember it in its exactitude. The impression remaining from all association with her was that of one whose opinions were finer because of deeper feeling, of longer brooding upon experience, of one who had distilled everything into its essence.

Toward the last her work took on an intimacy, a freedom of outgiving, wholly distinct from her earlier manner, and readers of this collection will be quick to note the difference between what one may term her classical period and her personal period. From the opening line of her hitherto uncollected poems:

> "We are old, it must be so,"

to the closing lines,

> "So many times this chanced to me—
> So many, many little deaths,
> The Last no more than space can be
> Between two tremulous-taken breaths—"

it is all of heart fiber and heart's blood. Books have not availed, her cherished Greek philosophies have not availed, life itself has not availed to still the restless want of such a spirit, and these poems are a cry for what has not been given and could never be given in this faulty human existence. She has looked too deeply and knows too well what to expect of life, and yet how intensely she loves it, how, to the last, she cherishes "The few, the golden-few, days that remain"!

To understand her wholly, one must know her capacity for living, her ability to turn all life into philosophy, to

extract from every event, however bitter, some essence which finally resolved it into a salutary part of experience,

"As out of a poisonous flower a bee conveyeth safe food."

She was to the end the unconquered spirit. Out of every inhibiting condition the vital self went free. The world might fall into ashes about her, but hers was the soul of the Phœnix, recreating itself from every pyre. It was this burning spirit, this intensity of living, that those who knew her best will remember the longest.

Readers of this volume will feel that her work was all of a piece with her living, that seldom has a personality so revealed itself as in these poems. Even the most classical theme is not treated for itself alone, but because life is quick at the heart of it. The cumulative effect of her poetry, when freed from its ephemeral phases and grouped according to the moods that inspired it, is at times overwhelming; one can hardly bear to have life cut so wholly to the core.

It has been my aim to detach from her published volumes, and a great mass of hitherto uncollected verse, those poems which seem to me the most perfect and enduring. In passing upon so large a body of work, for Miss Thomas in her later years was a voluminous writer, one is likely to omit some poem treasured by her admirers, but in the main it will, I hope, be found that this volume holds her essential offering and that it focuses her work so that even those who knew her best will find her greater than they thought.

Jessie B. Rittenhouse

Poems

Chosen from
Published Volumes

I

Evoe!

"Many are the wand-bearers, few are the true bacchanals."

MANY are the wand-bearers;
Their windy shouts I hear,
Along the hillside vineyard,
And where the wine runs clear;
They show the vine-leaf chaplet,
The ivy-wreathen spear;
But the god, the true Iacchus,
He does not hold them dear.

Many are the wand-bearers,
And bravely are they clad;
Yes, they have all the tokens
His early lovers had.
They sing the master passions,
Themselves unsad, unglad;
And the god, the true Iacchus—
He knows they are not mad!

Many are the wand-bearers;
The fawn-skin bright they wear;

Evoe!

There are among them mænads
  That rave with unbound hair.
They toss the harmless firebrand—
  It spends itself in air;
And the god, the true Iacchus,
  He smiles — and does not care.

Many are the wand-bearers;
  And who (ye ask) am I?
One who was born in madness,
  "Evoe!" my first cry —
Who dares, before your spear-points,
  To challenge and defy;
And the god, the true Iacchus,
  So keep me till I die!

Many are the wand-bearers.
  I bear with me no sign;
Yet, I was mad, was drunken,
  Ere yet I tasted wine;
Nor bleeding grape can slacken
  The thirst wherewith I pine;
And the god, the true Iacchus,
  Hears now this song of mine.

The Water of Dirce

"IF BUT the Gods, of their mercy,
Would let me return ere I die,
To drink of the water of Dirce —
On the cool sprinkled margin to lie!

"Yes, I drank of the Marcian waters,
Of Bandusia's song-haunted spring;
But not though Mnemosyne's daughters
The crystal of Helicon bring —

"Not they, not the charm-weaving Circe,
Could make me forget or forego,—
I was used to the water of Dirce,
I long for it, thirst for it so!

"The snows of Cithæron have chilled it —
I shall cease from this fever and pain,
If but the Gods have so willed it
I taste that wild sweetness again!"

Then answered the Gods, of their mercy,
"We give thee thy thirst and thy love,
But seek not the water of Dirce —
For thy Youth was the sweetness thereof."

Frost To-Night

APPLE-GREEN west and an orange bar,
And the crystal eye of a lone, one star. . .
And, "Child, take the shears and cut what you will.
Frost to-night — so clear and dead-still."

Then, I sally forth, half sad, half proud,
And I come to the velvet, imperial crowd,
The wine-red, the gold, the crimson, the pied,—
The dahlias that reign by the garden-side.

The dahlias I might not touch till to-night!
A gleam of the shears in the fading light,
And I gathered them all, — the splendid throng,
And in one great sheaf I bore them along.

In my garden of Life with its all-late flowers,
I heed a Voice in the shrinking hours:
"Frost to-night — so clear and dead-still . . ."
Half sad, half proud, my arms I fill.

The Security Of Desolation

HE WHO hath seen his grain-fields gather blight
Heeds not the withering of the garden flowers;
He grieves not at the day's withdrawing light
Who in a dungeon numbers his dim hours;
He feareth not the storm upon his head,
Whose garments with the rough salt wave are soaked,
And he whose fire within his house is dead,
Into the outer air will go uncloaked!

So he whose life some weak, loved hand has taken,
Flies not the shaft of banded myrmidon,
Nor trembles when his citadel is shaken:
Foretasting all, he hath no more to shun;
The Night, the Cold, the Dearth, the Wound obscure,
That men call Death, unmoved he shall endure!

The Tears Of The Poplars

HATH not the dark stream closed above thy head,
With envy of thy light, thou shining one?
Hast thou not, murmuring, made thy dreamless bed
Where blooms the asphodel, far from all sun?
But thou — thou dost obtain oblivious ease,
While here we rock and moan — thy funeral trees.

Have we not flung our tresses on the stream,
Hath not thy friend, the snowy cygnet, grieved,
And ofttimes watched for thy returning beam,
With archèd neck — and ofttimes been deceived?
A thousand years, and yet a thousand more,
Hast thou been mourned upon this reedy shore.

How long, how long since, all the summer day,
Earth heard the heavens sound from pole to pole,
While legion clouds stood forth in bright array;
Yet no rain followed on the thunder's roll!
Beneath that glittering legion shrank the seas,
And fire unseen was borne upon the breeze.

The ground was smouldering fire beneath our tread,
The forest dropped the leaf, and failed all grass,
The souls of stricken men their bodies fled,
And, sighing, flocked the wind. — We heard them pass!
The priest, that scanned the portent of the skies,
Fell reeling back, with pierced and shrivelled eyes.

The Tears Of The Poplars

But ah, he saw not what our sight discerned —
The flying chariot-wheel, with fervid tire —
The steeds that unaccustomed guidance spurned
With fateful hoof and breath that scattered fire —
He saw not thee and thine unmeasured fall,
And Jove, unheeding, in his cloudy hall!

Dragged headlong by those swift immortal horse,
Up to our sire went thy vain cry for aid;
Neither he cast a bound, to check their course,
Nor on the golden rein a hand he laid.
Brother beloved, what foe could so deceive,
Bidding thee dare what scarcely Gods achieve?

Alas! that we remember — and forget!
For, if we sometimes gain a brief repose,
Soon are we roused, by sudden fear beset;
Then, through our silver boughs a shudder goes,
Our heads we lift, we search the azure gloom,
As though thou still wert falling to thy doom!

Upon the earth no loves were ever ours,
Man greets us from afar, but comes not near,
Nor even round our dark unwindowed towers
Throng the light birds — so much our grief they fear!
We sigh — we tremble — 'tis not to the breeze —
Brother beloved, we are thy funeral trees!

The Life-Mask Of Keats

WHETHER, uplifting slow his dreamful head,
He leaves a couch the fragrant pine has strown,
Whether the dim, enchanted woods have known
The sleeper's unimperiled velvet tread;
Or whether, through some winding cavern led,
That, like the shell, rings drear with ocean's moan,
He wanders till the sea, wide, bright, and lone,
Beneath his visionary eye is spread —

Whether awake, or still by slumber bound,
Behold that shepherd with a world foregone,
To hoard the white rays of a mystic Dawn, —
A listener to aërial silver sound,
With subtle moonlight smile, devote, withdrawn, —
Behold Endymion, whom a Love unknown hath crowned!

On Severn's Last Sketch Of Keats

ANGEL of Sleep or Death! What hast thou here,
With meek head drooped, all haggard and outworn!
So looked Leander, to the startled morn,
Left by the tide on sands and rushes sere;
And so looked Hyacinth, to Phœbus dear,
As on the sward he lay, by envy shorn;
So looked Rome's martyr youth to burial borne
Within some delvèd cavern, chill and drear.

O fair death-sleeper! gazing on thee now,
Forgetting all thy years profound of rest
In peaceful barrow by the daisy drest,
We keep a vigil,—by thy pillow bow,
And listen, smiling through our tears, when thou
Murmurest of flowers that spring above thy breast.

II

The Little Sister

THE sighing trees — they all stood round —
Their friendly arms about me cast;
The brook with mingled shadow-sound
Of laughter and of sobbing passed;
The bank whereon I lay was spread
With small soft mosses, thick and deep;
The faint breeze stooped above my bed . . .
These spake with one accord, and said:
"Our Little Sister, — let her weep, —
Hush, let her weep!"

Their voices all afar withdrew
What time the tears ran free and fain . . .
Those tears the mosses drank as dew,
Those tears the brook received as rain;
For tears the trees their balsam shed,
Then took my heart, my grief, to keep,
And gave their griefless calm instead.
And once again all spake, and said:
"Our Little Sister, — let her sleep, —
Hush, let her sleep!"

Cure-All

TELL me, is there sovereign cure
For heart-ache, heart-ache,—
Cordial quick and potion sure
For heart-ache, heart-ache?

Fret thou not. If all else fail
For heart-ache, heart-ache,
One thing surely will avail,—
That's heart-break, heart-break!

The Dreamer

OH, not for her the early violet,
The swarm-like buds upon the fruit-trees set,
The robin singing in the first spring rain.
She will have gone ere these can come again.

And therefore is it that soft, pitying Sleep,
Each night, by ways the Winter cannot keep,
Brings her where bloom the flowers her childhood knew
In griefless places kissed by sun and dew.

In The Lilac Rain

ALL in the lilac-rain
  Tender and sweet,
Brushing the window-pane
  Sudden and fleet!

Came the dear wraith of her
  Out of lost Mays—
(Ah, but the faith of her,
  True to old ways!)

Scarcely her face I knew,
  Dim in the wet;
Only her eyes of blue
  Who could forget!
Hands full of lilacs, too—
  Lilac crowned, yet!

These were the flowers she loved
  In the far years;
These were the showers she loved—
  Light as her tears!
These were the hours she loved—
  Hope chasing fears!

In The Lilac Rain

Veiled in the lilac-rain,
  Comes she — and goes . . .
Sun through the clouds again,
  Fresh the wind blows.
Mine, a swift pleasure-pain
  None other knows.

The Soul Of The Violet

WHENEVER, betimes, the warm winds blow
And drive underground the lingering snow;
Whenever, amid such breathing space,
The brown earth raises a wistful face—
Whenever about the fields I go,
The soul of the violet haunts me so!

I look—there is never a leaf to be seen;
In the pleachèd grass is no thread of green;
But I walk as one who would chide his feet
Lest they trample the hope of something sweet!
Here can no flower be blooming, I know—
Yet the soul of the violet haunts me so!

Again and again that thrilling breath,
Fresh as the life that is snatched out of death,
Keen as the blow that Love might deal
Lest a spirit in trance should outward steal—
So thrilling that breath, so vital that blow—
The soul of the violet haunts me so!

Is it the blossom that slumbers as yet
Under the leaf-mould dank and wet,
And visits in dreams the wondering air
Whereof the passing sweetness I share?
Or is it the flower shed long ago?
The soul of the violet haunts me so!

Is It Spring Again In Ohio?

IS IT Spring again in Ohio?
Is the sleep of the Winter over?
Far in the heavens, the bluebird,
Low in the marshland, the plover,
Anear, in the orchard, the redbreast,—
Wherever one looks, the hover
Of wings — wherever one listens,
The note of the homing rover!
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

Is it Spring again in Ohio,
And the sleep of the Winter over?
Blooms in the woods the wild service?
Where Zephyr bendeth above her,
Gleams the faint dawn of the wind-flower?
Breaks from the turfy cover
The tender star of the thistle,—
The dew-cradling leaf of the clover?
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

Is It Spring Again In Ohio?

Is it Spring again in Ohio,
  And the sleep of the Winter over?
Are these the rare days—O my comrade—
  Blithest for homing rover?
Once would we forth and follow
  Far as the cry of the plover—
By stream, and by greening pasture,
  By fallow and breezy cover!
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

Is it Spring again in Ohio—
  Is the sleep of the Winter over?
Say to each wakening beauty,
  I am, as ever, its lover,
Hourly, from far, saluting:
  I, too, were a homing rover,
If I, from the sleep of the Winter,
  All that I loved might recover!
Is it Spring again in Ohio?

The Soul Of Things

DAY by day the soul of things
Up its countless ladders springs,
Fleeting back to whence it came,—
Inviolate, etherial flame!
I have pierced its changing shapes,
Coils and turnings, deft escapes!
Up yon swaying shaft it stole,
Of the scarlet gladiole.
First, the lowest bud it caught,
And with fire its chalice fraught;
Then, with aspiration new,
To the bloom above withdrew.
Every flower, thus bereft,
Like a quenchèd brand was left,—
Quickly into ashes fell
When the Genius fled its cell!
On the morrow it will rest
In the topmost blossom-crest;
Waving thence its light adieus,
Some unseen way it pursues.
Airy pyramid of grass
At its motion yields a pass.
Through the wind-loved wheat it flows,
Up the tufted sedge-flower goes,
Scales the foxglove's leaning spire,
Fans the wild lobelia's fire,

Where beside the pool it flashes;
And the slender vervain's lashes,
By the climbing spirit swayed,
All their purple length unbraid.
Thus the soul of blooming things
Up its countless ladders springs.

Delay

O SPIRIT of the Spring, delay, delay!
Be chary of thy gifts; by slow degrees
Roll back the leafy tide on forest trees;
And in all fields keep thou a jealous sway,
Lest the low grass break into sudden spray,
And clover toss its purples on the breeze.
Bind fast those lily-buds, that prying bees
Shall have no entrance, murmur as they may.

Scatter not yet the orchard's scented snows,
Nor break the cage that holds the butterfly,
Nor let the blow-ball wander up the sky:—
What! flown so lightly? By yon upstart rose,
Summer is here with all her gaudy shows.
O spirit of the Spring, good-by, good-by!

Rose-Color

SEND me thorns a half year through,
Branches hung with frozen dew,
Blight-leaf feuds and blanching hates,
(If ye will) ye cankered Fates:
All your leaden seasons' toil
To fair weather lends a foil!
'Gainst December how June glows,—
Hey! the color of the rose!

Bid the morning of my day
(If ye will) be dull and gray;
Chase afar the shining hours
With a scourge of braided showers,
Lightning-flash, and thunder-crack;
But at eve the cloudy rack
Blossoms like a garden-close,—
Hey! the color of the rose!

Beauty, on whom homage waits,
I appeal to thee from Fates.
As my year and as my day
Genial turn from cold and gray,
Let the selfsame sign bespeak
Thy rich heart upon thy cheek.
Up the gracious June warmth goes,—
Hey! the color of the rose!

Ephemera

MIDGES and moths—ay, all you restless things
The dance and tourney in the fields of air:
You, Psyche's postman, trim and debonair,
With eye-like freckles on your bronzèd wings;
You, candle-elves, whose strange emblazonings
With sign of death our ancient gossips scare,
Or who, when sleeps the humming-bird, repair
With stealthy beaks to drain the honey-springs,—

Your secret's out! I know you for the souls
Of all light loves that ever caused heartache,
Still dancing suit as some new beauty toles!
Nor can you e'er your flitting ways forsake
Till the just winds strip off your painted stoles,
And sere leaves follow in your downward wake.

Poppies In Our Wheat

LET no blame upon us fall,
Thrifty ones of cot and hall,
That, while ye take care to hoard
Corn and wine for winter's board,
We beside the hedgerow lie,
Heedless how bright hours go by.
Wonder not we dread no want,
When the year is bare and gaunt:
Idle bread we have to eat,—
Poppies grew amidst our wheat.

Blame not us, ye revelers blithe,
Who have lodged the rake and scythe,
And with fan and flail no more
Tread the granary's breezy floor:
Though, with humming wire and flute,
The boon Season well ye suit,
Call us not by word or glance;
We will neither feast nor dance.
Blame not us that sleep is sweet,—
Poppies grew amidst our wheat.

Poverty

O POVERTY, if thou and I must wed,
I'll surely try to sing thee into fame;
I'll call thee many a high-descended name,
To shed a lustre on thy dowerless head;
Say thou'rt a royal maiden, Spartan bred,
Early bound out to a harsh foster-dame,
My keen-eyed Hardihood! A worthy shame
I'll have of all those cates on which I fed
Before I found a zest for thy plain food.
I laugh to think how we shall entertain
Our friends from Sybaris, with all their train,
On nuts and berries from the underwood;
We'll have our floor with rushes daily strewed,
And patch the roof with boughs against the rain.

The Grasshopper

SHUTTLE of the sunburnt grass,
Fifer in the dun cuirass,
Fifing shrilly in the morn,
Shrilly still at eve unworn;
Now to rear, now in the van,
Gayest of the elfin clan:
Though I watch their rustling flight,
I can never guess aright
Where their lodging-places are;
'Mid some daisy's golden star,
Or beneath a roofing leaf,
Or in fringes of a sheaf,
Tenanted as soon as bound!
Loud thy reveille doth sound,
When the earth is laid asleep,
And her dreams are passing deep,
On mid-August afternoons;
And through all the harvest moons,
Nights brimmed up with honeyed peace,
Thy gainsaying doth not cease.
When the frost comes, thou art dead;
We along the stubble tread,
On blue, frozen morns, and note
No least murmur is afloat:
Wondrous still our fields are then,
Fifer of the elfin men!

Something Passes

SOMETHING passes in the air,
That if seen would be most fair;
And if we the ear could train
To a keener joy and pain,
Sweeter warblings would be heard
Than from wild Arabian bird:
Something passes.

Blithest in the spring it stirs,
Wakes with earliest harbingers:
Then it peers from heart's-ease faces,
Clothes itself in wind-flower graces;
Or, begirt with waving sedge,
Pipes upon the river's edge;
Or its whispering way doth take
Through the plumed and scented brake;
Or, within the silent wood,
Whirls one leaf in fitful mood.
Something knits the morning dews
In a web of seven hues;
Something with the May-fly races,
Or the pallid blow-ball chases
Till it darkens 'gainst the moon,
Full, upon a night of June:
Something passes.

Something Passes

Something climbs, from bush or croft,
On a gossamer stretched aloft;
Sails, with glistening spars and shrouds,
Till it meets the sailing clouds;
Else it with the swallow flies,
Glimpsed at dusk in southern skies;
Glides before the even-star,
Steals its light, and beckons far.
Something sighs within the sigh
Of the wind, that, whirling by,
Strews the roof and flooded eaves
With the autumn's dead-ripe leaves.
Something — still unknown to me —
Carols in the winter tree,
Or doth breathe a melting strain
Close beneath the frosted pane:
Something passes.

Painters, fix its fleeting lines;
Show us by what light it shines!
Poets, whom its pinions fan,
Seize upon it, if you can!
All in vain, for, like the air,
It goes through the finest snare:
Something passes.

Vertumnus

I TOOK a day, and sought for him
Through bosky aisles untracked and dim,
Through cultured field and orchard sweet:—
Did I o'ertake his flying feet?

Once, as I crossed a sylvan glade,
My step the green-brier would have stayed,
The violet looked as it would speak,
And the wild-service, white and meek,
Against my face its coolness laid;
And once the dew on blended blade
Turned towards the sun a sparkling eye,
As flushed and eager I sped by.

As I sped by, as I sped by,—
And fervid noon was in the sky,
And sickles rested on the swath,—
One bearded stalk awoke from sloth,
And lightly swayed it to and fro
Till all its fellows swayed arow,
And where no breathèd sound had been
Went bickering whispers fine and thin.

As I ran on, as I ran on,—
Some bows grown bright and some grown wan.
And creeping leafy fires widespread,—
All suddenly the hazel shed
Before my feet its umbered mast,
The oak a shower of acorns cast,
The vine swung low its clusters blue,
The star-flower elvish glances threw.

Morn was when I the chase began,
Close on the evening-bound I ran;
And, counting but a rounded day,
Lo! seasons three had slipped away.
An hundred times the clew I missed,
Too rapt to pause, to look, and list,—
An hundred times, unweeting, trod
Straight past the merry masking god.

Music

THE god of music dwelleth out of doors.
All seasons through his minstrelsy we meet,
Breathing by field and covert haunting-sweet:
From organ-lofts in forests old he pours
A solemn harmony; on leafy floors
To smooth autumnal pipes he moves his feet,
Or with the tingling plectrum of the sleet
In winter keen beats out his thrilling scores.

Leave me the reed unplucked beside the stream,
And he will stoop and fill it with the breeze;
Leave me the viol's frame in leafy trees
Unwrought, and it shall wake a druid theme;
Leave me the whispering shell on nereid shores:
The god of music dwelleth out of doors.

Syrinx

COME forth, too timid spirit of the reed!
Leave thy plashed coverts and elusions shy,
And find delight at large in grove and mead.
No ambushed harm, no wanton peering eye;
The shepherd's uncouth god thou need'st not fear,—
Pan has not passed this way for many a year.

'Tis but the vagrant wind that makes thee start,—
The pleasure-loving south, the freshening west;
The willow's woven veil they softly part,
To fan the lily on the stream's warm breast;
No ruder stir, no footstep passing near,—
Pan has not passed this way for many a year.

Whether he lies in some mossed wood, asleep,
And heeds not how the acorns drop around,
Or in some shelly cavern near the deep,
Lulled by its pulses of eternal sound,
He wakes not, answers not our sylvan cheer,—
Pan has been gone this many a silent year.

Else we had seen him, through the mists of morn,
To upland pasture lead his bleating charge:
There is no shag upon the stunted thorn,
No hoof-print on the river's silver marge;
Nor broken branch of pine, nor ivied spear,—
Pan has not passed that way for many a year.

Syrinx

O tremulous elf, reach me a hollow pipe,
  The best and smoothest of thy mellow store!
Now I may blow till Time be hoary ripe,
  And listening streams forsake the paths they wore:
Pan loved the sound, but now will never hear,—
Pan has not trimmed a reed this many a year!

And so, come freely forth, and through the sedge
  Lift up a dimpled, warm, Arcadian face,
As on that day when fear thy feet did fledge,
  And thou didst safely win the breathless race. . . .
I am deceived: nor Pan nor thou art here,—
Pan has been gone this many a silent year!

III

The Palmer

THOU who wouldst a palmer be,
Let thy faith suffice to thee.
Say not, "I to-morrow will
Get beyond the sunrise hill,
Pass the sea, and cross the sand
Till I come to Holy Land,
And beneath the lamps that glow
In the shrine my heart I show,
Leave my gift and round my vow,
Bearing thence the victor bough."

Say not this, nor take in hand
Staff and scrip for Holy Land.
Thou be wiser than the rest
Who have bound them to the quest;
Breathe thy vow and waft thy gift,
Single heart to heaven lift;
Here remain if thou wouldst be
Palmer in all verity:
Know thy faith doth brighter shine
Than the lamps within the shrine.

A Peu Près

THY palace walls were founded well,
And well its courses thou didst lay;
One tower defied the genie's spell,
And stands a ruin to this day.

The Land of Flowers thou didst attain,
And see the spring's immortal jet;
Thy staff-worn hand was reached in vain—
Thy lips that crystal never wet!

With pains the altar thou didst dress,
And the burnt sacrifice prepare,
And call upon the God to bless—
All but the Fire from Heaven was there!

Thou shak'st thy lance on hard-fought field,
Thou sleep'st, the tingling stars above;—
Pity and praise sweet eyes can yield,
But ne'er vouchsafe the Light of Love!

What dost thou lack? 'Tis almost naught
That parts thee from thy Heart's Desire,—
A step — a span — an airy thought:
A pulse-beat more, thou didst require!

Patmos

ALL around him Patmos lies,
Who hath spirit-gifted eyes,
Who his happy sight can suit
To the great and the minute.
Doubt not but he holds in view
A new earth and heaven new;
Doubt not but his ear doth catch
Strains nor voice nor reed can match;
Many a silver, sphery note
Shall within his hearing float.

All around him Patmos lies,
Who unto God's priestess flies:
Thou, O Nature, bid him see,
Through all guises worn by thee,
A divine apocalypse.
Manifold his fellowships:
Now the rocks their archives ope;
Voiceless creatures tell their hope
In a language symbol-wrought;
Groves to him sigh out their thought;
Musings of the flower and grass
Through his quiet spirit pass.
'Twixt new earth and heaven new
He hath traced and holds the clue.
Number his delights ye may not;
Fleets the year, but these decay not.

Patmos

Now the freshets of the rain,
Bounding on from hill to plain,
Show him earthly streams have rise
In the bosom of the skies.
Now he feels the morning thrill,
As upmounts, unseen and still,
Dew the wing of evening drops.
Now the frost, that meets and stops
Summer's feet in tender sward,
Greets him, breathing heavenward.
Hieroglyphics writes the snow,
Through the silence falling slow;
Types of star and petaled bloom
A white missal-page illume.
By these floating symbols fine,
Heaven-truth shall he divine.
All around him Patmos lies,
Who hath spirit-gifted eyes;
He need not afar remove,
He need not the times reprove,
Who would hold perpetual lease
Of an isle in seas of peace.

The Flutes Of The God

OH that I knew where to find thee, — to fall and encompass thy knees, —
Thou, as thou art, austere, with thy turrets and dungeoning keys,
Thou, with the frondage of oak, that enshadows thy grave, straight brows!
I would cling to thy knees till thou wouldst absolve the Corybant's vows, —
Even his vows, who was mine, ere the voice from the forested hill,
With the flutes and the cymbals, he followed, and them he followeth still!
He follows, he dreams, with wide eyes all bare of the curtains of sleep;
He heeds not the dawn on the height, nor the shadows as upward they creep, —
If the arrows of winter be forged, or the flame of the summer be fanned!
He feels not the thong of the priest, nor the blade in the lean, wild hand;
Crimson the thorn-set path where the foot unsandalled hath trod.
He stayeth for none he shall meet, — he hears but the flutes of the God!
The mother that bore him, the father that guided afield his young feet,
Into the wilderness journey, they come to thy desolate seat.

At the foot of a fir tree they find him. Trembling, their knees and their speech:
"Come away, thou, our support! Like the vine in the wind we outreach;
Prop have we none; we are stripped, we are shaken by every gust;
Withers unripened our fruit, and we stoop to be gathered to dust.
Leave thy dark seat by the fir tree, and hear us while yet thou mayst hear!"
Their voices die off on the waste, and the sigh of the fir tree comes drear.
They wait for the voice in response; he uprears his thin form from the sod:
"What say ye? Who speaketh? I hear — I hear but the flutes of the God!"
I was the maiden betrothed, and "Surely," they said, "thou shalt go,
Shalt touch his dead heart into life, and his eyes shall regain their lost glow!"
Breathless, I trod the lone ways. Among the mad priests, as he ranged,
I beheld whom I loved, but ah! I beheld him now changed, how estranged!
I had drawn him apart from their throng, I had whispered the words that are charms,
Had touched his dead heart into life, and pillowed his head in my arms;

But farther and farther aloof, to the notes of wild music he trod.
"Who follows?" he cried,—"who follows? I hear but the flutes of the God!"

Oh that I knew where to find thee! Whether, 'mid autumn's increase,
With the young of the year around thee, thou givest them plenty with peace;
Or whether, dark-thoughted, remote through the waste, thy deity roves,
And the eyes of thy lions glance fire, in the twilight of dells and of groves.
Bright are their eyes impatient, the blast of the desert their breath;
Who crosseth their path, without thee, shall surely be doomed unto death.
Yet, mother of gods and of men, of the broods of the earth and the rocks,—
Thou, Berecynthia, hear! by thy love, by his dark flowing locks,
By the smile on his lips, by the dream in his eyes, thou sendest at will,
By the soft-drawn sigh while thou watchest his slumber amid the high hill!
Thine Atys thou hast, though a sleeper; the care from his forehead is smoothed;
But he whom I love never sleeps, and his wild eyes never be soothed!

Give him but peace and my arms, and quiet supreme, in the end;
Bid some old fir tree his branches above us in shelter extend;
Then, the life to the air, the frail substance that held it awhile to the clod:
So shall he waken and madden no more to the flutes of the God!

The Voice Of The Laws

THIS from that soul incorrupt whom Athens had doomed to the death,
When Crito brought promise of freedom: "Vainly thou spendest thy breath!
Dost remember the wild Corybantes? feel they the knife or the rod?
Heed they the fierce summer sun, the frost, or winterly flaws? —
If any entreat them, they answer, 'We hear but the flutes of the God!'

"So even am I, O my Crito! Thou pleadest a losing cause!
Thy words are but sound without import — I hear but the Voice of the Laws;
And, know thou! the Voice of the Laws is to me as the flutes of the God."

Thus spake that soul incorrupt; and wherever, since hemlock was quaffed,
A man has stood forth without fear — has chosen the dark deep draught —
Has taken the lone one way, nor the path of dishonor has trod —
Behold! he, too, hears but the Voice of the Laws, the flutes of the God.

The Courage Of The Lost

THERE be who are afraid to fear,
The myrmidons of Hope!
Their watchword cannot lend me cheer
'Gainst that with which I cope!

There is a courage of the lost,
Who sail uncharted seas,
Past many a firm or flying coast,
And I must sail with these.

There is a valor of the slain,
Who strive past mortal sight
While their spent corses strew the plain,
And I must fight their fight.

Hast thou that courage of the lost,
Past theirs, that reach their goal?
Whoe'er thou art, I thee accost —
Thou Comrade of my Soul!

Thou dost not fear to fear — ah, no!
The depths wilt thou descend;
And when thy planet sinketh low
Wilt make of Night a friend!

Then come! We two are proof, at last,
We dare our fears to own—
But had our lot with Hope been cast
What heart-break had we known!

A Chant Of The Fought Field

Nunc dimittis

AS ONE who under evening skies
Upon a fought field stricken lies
(Unknown for stains of blood and grime)
Is fain the mortal shaft to draw
And let life issue through the flaw,
Even so am I, and even so,
Unhand me, Time, and let me go —
Unhand me, Time!

Upon his clogged and languid sense
Vague cries are borne — he heeds not whence,
Nor if they utter cheer sublime,
Or fill the air with craven moan;
His spirit's fire is all unblown;
Even so is mine — so faint, so low;
Unhand me, Time, and let me go —
Unhand me, Time!

For heaven-truth my sword I drew,
With anger keen I did pursue
Not the frail worker but the crime
He framed in glooming ignorance.
Now let who may lift sword and lance,
Or let the rust upon them grow!
Unhand me, Time, and let me go —
Unhand me, Time!

A Chant Of The Fought Field

Or well or ill if I have wrought,
My deed was mated with my thought,
As bell with bell in tuneful chime.
All things that fall to man's dear lot
I did receive, and faltered not;
Quick come the last! and even so,
Unhand me, Time, and let me go —
Unhand me, Time!

A dream it was! All that hath been
Now lapseth like some passioned scene
Played by a well-deceiving mime,
Who most of all himself deceives,
And, waking up, regretless leaves.
I reach for substance past the show —
Unhand me, Time, and let me go —
Unhand me, Time!

Losses

SPEED had not served, strength had not flowed amain,
Heart had not braced me, for this journey's strain,
Had I foreseen what losses must be met;
But drooping losel was I never yet!

So rich in losses through long years I've grown,
So rich in losses (and so proud, I own)
Myself I pity not, but only such
As have not had, nor therefore lost, so much.

Behind me ever grew a hungry Vast
Which travelers fear to face, but call the Past;
So much it won from me I can but choose
To exult that I've so little left to lose.

When that shall go, as fain it is to go,
Like some full sail when winds of voyage blow,
At this late nick of time to murmur sore
Were idle, since so much I've lost before!

So much I've lost, lost out of hand — ah, yes!
But were that all, my fortune I could bless;
For whensoever aught has slipped away,
Some dearer thing has gone to find the stray;

And then, to find the finder loth or slow,
Yet dearer thing my wistful heart let go,
With hope like his whose glancing arrow gave
The clue to Pari-banou's palace-cave.

Perchance one loss the more, regains the whole,
Lost loves and faith and young delight of soul:
I'm losing — what? Ah, Life, join thou the quest;
It may be, to be lost, is not unblest!

A Far Cry To Heaven

WHAT! dost thou pray that the outgone tide be rolled back on the strand,
The flame be rekindled that mounted away from the smouldering brand,
The past-summer harvest flow golden through stubble-lands naked and sere,
The winter-gray woods upgather and quicken the leaves of last year? —
Thy prayers are as clouds in a drouth; regardless, unfruitful, they roll;
For this, that thou prayest vain things, 'tis a far cry to Heaven, my soul,—
Oh, a far cry to Heaven!

Thou dreamest the word shall return, shot arrow-like into the air,
The wound in the breast where it lodged be balmed and closed for thy prayer,
The ear of the dead be unsealed, till thou whisper a boon once denied,
The white hour of life be restored, that passed thee unprized, undescribed! —
Thy prayers are as runners that faint, that fail within sight of the goal,
For this, that thou prayest fond things, 'tis a far cry to Heaven, my soul,—
Oh, a far cry to Heaven!

A Far Cry To Heaven

And cravest thou fondly the quivering sands shall be firm
to thy feet,
The brackish pool of the waste to thy lips be made whole-
some and sweet?
And cravest thou subtly the bane thou desirest, be wrought
to thy good,
As forth from a poisonous flower a bee conveyeth safe
food?
For this, that thou prayest ill things, thy prayers are an
anger-rent scroll;
The chamber of audit is closed,—'tis a far cry to Heaven,
my soul,—
Oh, a far cry to Heaven!

The Heart Upon The Sleeve

WHAT, noble masters, all amort?
Why will ye be the mob-world's sport,
And let each knave his weapon pick
Wherewith to stab ye to the quick!

Lo! arms and charms ye do not lack
(If arms and charms could save from wrack),
Nor any point of crafty art
To triple fence and guard the heart!

Yet ye are scathed; unhurt am I,
Though to attack I open lie:
All nude of corselet, casque, or greave,
I wear my heart upon my sleeve!

My heart upon my sleeve I wear,
And all who see may read it there;
"That poor, plain thing, a heart?" they cry,
And subtle-minded pass it by.

I laugh, I sigh, I praise, I chide,
With moods of mirth and sadness pied;
They call me, then, chameleon elf
That hath no color of himself

But some, suspecting artifice,
The life they seek to take still miss,
Since all the deeper they may smite,
I bear my heart more high and light!

They think I case my bosom frail
With woven links of hidden mail;
The simple truth will none believe,—
I wear my heart upon my sleeve!

Still, noble masters, all amort?
Your shields, your plates of proof, fall short;
But wear the heart upon the sleeve,
And not a dint shall it receive!

IV

The Compass

TOUCH but with gentlest finger the crystal that circles the Mariner's Guide —
To the East and the West how it drifts, and trembles, and searches on every side!
But it comes to its rest, and its light lance poises only one self-same way
Since ever a ship spread her marvellous sea-wings, or plunged her swan-breast through the spray —
For North points the needle!

Ye look not alone for the sign of the lode-star; the lode-stone, too, lendeth cheer;
Yet one in the heavens is established forever, and one is compelled through the sphere.
What! and ye chide not the fluttering magnet that seemeth to fly its troth,
Yet even now is again recording its fealty's silent oath —
As North points the needle!

Praise ye bestow that, though mobile and frail as tremulous spheret of dew,
It obeys an imperial law that ye know not (yet know that it guideth most true);
So are ye content with its fugitive guidance — ye, but the winds' and waves' sport! —
So are ye content to sail by your compass, and come in fair hour to your port;
For North points the needle!

And now, will ye censure, because, of compulsion, the spirit that rules in this breast,
To show what a poet must show, was attempered, and touched with a cureless unrest,
Swift to be moved with all human mutation, to traverse Passion's whole range?
Mood succeeds mood, and humor fleets humor, yet never heart's drift can they change,
For North points the needle!

Inconstant I were to that Sovereign Bidding (why or whence given, unknown),
Failed I to tent the entire round of motive ere sinking back to my own:
The error be yours, if ye think my faith erring or deem my allegiance I fly;
I follow my law and fulfil it all duly — and look! when your doubt runneth high —
North points the needle!

Palingenesis

I DWELT with the God ere He fashioned the worlds with their heart of fire,
Ere the vales sank down at His voice or He spake to the mountains, "Aspire!"
Or ever the sea to dark heaven made moan in its hunger for light,
Or the four winds were born of the morning and missioned on various flight.

In a fold of His garment I slept, without motion, or knowledge, or skill,
While age upon age the thought of creation took shape at His will;
Sleeping I lay by the right hand that framed it — this wonderful earth —
Nor heard I the stars of the morning, chanting its anthem of birth.

Part had I not in the scheme till He sent me to work on the reef,
Nude, in the seafoam, to clothe it with coralline blossom and leaf.
Patient I wrought — as a weaver that blindly plyeth the loom,
Nor knew that the God dwelt with me, there as I wrought in the gloom.

Strength had I not till chiefdom supreme of the waters
He gave;
Joyous I went — tumultuous; the billows before me I
drave —
Myself as a surge of the sea when impelled by the driving
storm;
Nor knew that the God dwelt with me, there in leviathan's
form.

Lightness I had not, till, decked with light plumes, He
endued me with speed —
Buoyant the hollow quill as the hollow stem of the reed!
And I gathered my food from the ooze, and builded my
home at His word;
Nor knew that the God dwelt with me clothed in the garb
of a bird.

I trod not the earth till on plains unmeasured He sent me
to rove,
To taste of the sweetness of grass and the leaves of the
summer grove.
For shelter He hollowed the cave; fresh springs in the rock
He unsealed;
But I knew not the God dwelt with me that ranged as a
beast of the field.

Palingenesis

Foresight I had not, nor memory, nor vision that sweeps
in the skies,
Till He made me man, and bade me uplift my marvelling
eyes!
My hands I uplifted — my cries grew a prayer — on the
green turf I knelt.
And knew that the God had dwelt with me wherever of
old I had dwelt!

Wild is the life of the wave, and free is the life of the air,
And sweet is the life of the measureless pastures, unbur-
dened of care;
They all have been mine, I upgather them all in the being
of man,
Who knoweth, at last, that the God hath dwelt with him
since all life began!

My heritage draw I from these—I love though I leave
them behind;
But shall I not speak for the dumb, and lift up my sight
for the blind?
I am kin to the least that inhabits the air, the waters,
the clod;
They wist not what bond is between us, they know not
the Indwelling God!

For under my hands alone the charactered Past hath He
laid,
One moment to scan ere it fall like a scroll into ashes
and fade!
Enough have I read to know and declare — my ways He
will keep,
If onward I go, or again in a fold of His garment I sleep!

Himeros

IT SHALL befall,
Ere yet the wild winged droves
Revisit the bare groves,
That midst her wintry sleep
The world's great heart shall leap
At some far call.
At some far call,
Sets out the migrant bird;
The drear dead grass is stirred,
The moth its prison breaks,
And each lone life partakes
The life of all.

Of old, as now,
This was that power benign —
This was that power malign
That did ordain unrest
And hunger to be blest:
To whom all bow.
To whom all bow: —
The blossom and the sod
Feel the unquiet God;
Bird, beast, and thine own race
Strive not before his face —
Then, strivest thou?

Despair thine art!
Thou canst not hush those cries,
Thou canst not blind those eyes,
Thou canst not chain those feet,
But they a path shall beat
Forth from thine heart.
Forth from thine heart!
There wouldst thou dungeon him,
In cell both close and dim —
The key he turns on thee,
And out he goeth free!
Despair thine art!

Thy bondslave — no!
But thou shalt wear his chain,
Nor meed for toil shalt gain,
But evermore be glad,
Though hungering and unclad,
To serve him so.
Thou'lt serve him so!
He goeth with thee, save
Into thy quiet grave;
For he was born ere thee,
Nor ever shall he be
With man laid low.

Not then he tires,
When thou art smallest dust
Driven on every gust!
Still round the glowing world
Though thou be cold, are hurled
His quenchless fires.
His quenchless fires
Brothers born after thee
(Kin of mortality)
Shall house, and welcome give;
And lordless shall he live —
Lord of Desires!

The Quiet Pilgrim

WHEN on my soul in nakedness
His swift, avertless hand did press,
Then I stood still, nor cried aloud,
Nor murmured low in ashes bowed;
And, since my woe is utterless,
To supreme quiet I am vowed;
Afar from me be moan and tears,—
I shall go softly all my years.

Whenso my quick, light-sandaled feet
Bring me where Joys and Pleasures meet,
I mingle with their throng at will;
They know me not an alien still,
Since neither words nor ways unsweet
Of storèd bitterness I spill;
Youth shuns me not, nor gladness fears,—
For I go softly all my years.

Whenso I come where Griefs convene,
And in my ear their voice is keen,
They know me not, as on I glide,
That with Arch Sorrow I abide.
They haggard are, and drooped of mien,
And round their brows have cypress tied:
Such shows I leave to light Grief's peers,—
I shall go softly all my years.

The Quiet Pilgrim

Yea, softly! heart of hearts unknown.
Silence hath speech that passeth moan,
More piercing-keen than breathèd cries
To such as heed, make sorrow-wise.
But save this voice without a tone,
That runs before me to the skies,
And rings above thy ringing spheres,
Lord, I go softly all my years!

Memorial Of The Unremembered

WHOM I loved Fortune loved not;
Whom I remember are forgot
As though they never breathed this air
That to my listening soul sighs, "Where?"

My saints have on the earth no shrine
Save in this shattered heart of mine
Whose trembling walls are sinking fast,
Whose incense hath not long to last.

My prophets none did heed nor trust;
My conquerors, conquered, bit the dust.
Not with their latest breath they knew
That deeds of theirs could none undo.

Nor consciousness of might or right
Sustained them in the gathering night,
But in all self-abasement they
From the great battle passed away.

Oh, somewhere be it otherwise
Than under these occluding skies!
Somewhere, in unimagined ways,
Be scored their triumph and their praise!

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Memorial Of The Unremembered

Where'er they dwell, to earth unknown,
I am content if me they own
Among their number,—theirs forgot,
Unsung, unshrined, exalted not,—

And if their shining brows (unstarred)
But bend on me their long regard,
And if their silence saith, "Have peace,
From tears for us, or paeans, cease!"

V

The Passer-By

STEP lightly across the floor,
And somewhat more tender be.

There were many that passed my door,
Many that sought after me.
I gave them the passing word —
Ah, why did I give thee more?
I gave thee what could not be heard,
What had not been given before;
The beat of my heart I gave . . .
And I give thee this flower on my grave.

My face in the flower thou mayst see.
Step lightly across the floor.

Vos Non Vobis

THERE was a garden planned in Spring's young days,
Then, Summer held it in her bounteous hand;
And many wandered through its blooming ways;
But ne'er the one for whom the work was planned.
And it was vainly done —
For what are many, if we lack the one?

There was a song that lived within the heart
Long time — and then on Music's wing it strayed!
All sing it now, all praise its artless art;
But ne'er the one for whom the song was made.
And it was vainly done —
For what are many, if we lack the one?

The Deep-Sea Pearl

THE love of my life came not
As love unto others is cast;
For mine was a secret wound —
But the wound grew a pearl, at last.

The divers may come and go,
The tides, they arise and fall;
The pearl in its shell lies sealed,
And the Deep Sea covers all.

The Lover's World

THEY were all more subtle than I,
Who moved in blind rapture among them.
"That our notes are new, we deny,
A thousand times over we've sung them,
Be it thrush or linnet or dove!"
"Nay, but ye birds, one and all,
Now sing with a rounded completeness,
From matin to vesper call;
Where got ye that marvelous sweetness?"
"*From the voice of the soul of thy love!*"

They were all more subtle than I,
Who knelt in rapt worship before them.
"The roses of summers gone by,
Didst thou so praise, so adore them,
And set them all roses above?"
"Nay; but ye are not the same—
Ye bloom with a beauty supremer;
Where got ye that delicate flame,
Half veiling your petals?" "O dreamer,
From the light of the soul of thy love!"

Valkyr

HE WHOM I loved loved no one —
Nor woman, child, nor man:
His joy was but in battle,
To lead his rushing clan.
I had the gift of magic —
Through changing forms I ran!
I was his white plume, floating
Above the serried van!

The plume was but a target,
Amid the flying scath;
And, then, was I his broadsword,
Annealed in fiery bath,
And through the hated phalanx
We cut a groaning swath;
But when his arch foe scaped him,
He brake me, in his wrath!

Then I became his corselet,
That next his heart he wore;
Ay, and his useless buckler,
For he fell wounded sore.
I was the wild, strange music
That went his soul before;
And "Hark!" he murmured, dying,
"There's singing on the moor!"

Valkyr

I was that wild, strange music
  That sought his soul to win!
I led him onward, onward,
  Till died the battle din;
Across the moor, the upland —
  By breathless stream and lin,
I turned, to draw him to me
  In regions fine and thin!

His eyes were oped, to know me,
  But bright with wrath their gleam.
I had the gift of magic —
  Fate, only, is supreme!
I bore him to Valhalla,
  In the red Planet's gleam;
And there he dreams of battle —
  And I am but his Dream!

VI

Frost

HOW small a tooth hath mined the season's heart!
How cold a touch hath set the wood on fire,
Until it blazes like a costly pyre
Built for some Ganges emperor, old and swart,
Soul-sped on clouds of incense! Whose the art
That webs the streams, each morn, with silver wire,
Delicate as the tension of a lyre, —
Whose falchion pries the chestnut-burr apart?

It is the Frost, a rude and Gothic sprite
Who doth upbuild the Summer's palaced wealth,
And puts her dear loves all to sword or flight;
Yet in the hushed, unmindful winter's night
The spoiler builds again with jealous stealth,
And sets a mimic garden, cold and bright.

Linus: A Lament At The Gathering Of The Vintage

NOW the golden tire of Phoebus
Turns to trace its shortest arc;
Now, no more sings Philomela
From the leafy turret dark —
Nightingale and swallow flitting,
Voiceless, to the Libyan shore;
Now, upon Demeter's daughter
Shuts the sunken iron door —
And now, young Linus is no more.

He was with us at the pruning
Ere the leaf shot forth the vine;
He was with us in the Maytime
When the buds were red as wine, —
With us, when the summer dewfall
Made the meadows silvery hoar,
Shared our nooning in the shadow,
Shared the toiler's homely store —
But Linus shares with us no more.

Linus

He is fled, — the well-beloved
With the lighted eyes of dawn,
With the tresses of sea-amber
And the footstep of the fawn!
If the red-eyed pack of Sirius
His fair-fashioned body tore,
There was found no stain of crimson
On the path his footstep wore;
Yet Linus — Linus comes no more.

He is strangely parted from us,
None received his passing-sigh!
Now, the evening-purple clusters
Heavy on the trellis lie:
When we crush those purple clusters
Filled with sweetness to the core —
Lo! it is the life of Linus
That the presses shall outpour;
But Linus we shall see no more.

He is gone with all of beauty,
Withered from the season's crown,
One by one, slow-faltering downward —
As these vine-leaves falter down!
Otherwhere is other mourning —
Ay, the boatman stills his oar,
Stays the shepherd, winding foldward,
At far cries that, searching sore,
Make murmur of *no more! no more!*

Linus

This the burden, this the sorrow,
  Where they winnow out the corn;
This the burden breathing lonely
  Through the hunter's unblown horn!
Say to those that mourn Adonis,
  Trampled by the mountain boar —
Say to those that yet mourn Daphnis,
  On the misty threshing floor,
  That Linus — Linus is no more!

Ask if they have hope of Daphnis
  When the morrow spring is born:
Will he rise among the furrows,
  Midst the tender blades of corn?
Ask the foresters if Cypris
  Their Adonis will restore?
Plenteous flowers wake after Winter, —
  Not the flower that bloomed before!
  And Linus — Linus wakes no more.

Lityerses And The Reapers

'TIS the field of Lityerses: ripe and high the harvest stands;
Sickles gleam, like summer lightnings, all about the sunny lands.
'Tis the field of Lityerses: he, a harvest-lord austere,
Gathers whom he will for reapers, bringing them from far and near.
Though it be the chief of legions, or descent of princes great,
Wealthy merchant, speeding herald,— none shall pass his palace gate.
Forth he comes, with churlish greeting, bids the traveler haste afield;
Though his hand be strange and skilless, he a reaping-hook must wield,
From the morn until the shadow thrusting in the swarthy grain,
Where the keen cicada, whirring, stings with sound his dizzy brain.
Hears he not, above the clamor, what the hollow south wind saith?
Strive no longer, yield the contest,— this swift sickle-man is Death!

Reapers, what shall be the anthem, as the swath before us falls,

While in air the vision beckons of our native towers and halls?
Reapers, what shall be the banquet, where no harvest-home is spread?
We shall feed on endless slumber, with this alien ground our bed!
Through the sickle falls the poppy,— glowing flower and drooping bud
Fall, and scatter down the furrow, like the spilth of crimson blood:
So shall life be shorn and scattered ere the star that crowns the eve;
They shall shudder at the harvest who shall come to bind and sheave,
One by one our faces scanning by the gleams of western sky;
Each, in passing, payeth tribute from a moist and piteous eye.
Know ye not who reaps beside us? Feel ye not his panting breath?
Brother reapers, vain our toiling,— this swift sickle-man is Death!

Lately, came Sicilian Daphnis, leaving flock and fold behind;
Shepherd of the sheltered valley,— he to dare the wave and wind!
Love and wrong his heart have girded with a strength unknown before.

On the robber's track he follows, hither, to this fateful shore;
Comes he to the robber's fastness, where the maiden lies in thrall.
Vain the gifts he bears for ransom, vain on praying knees to fall!
Lityerses brings a sickle: "Reap, O guest, with me to-day:
If thou conquer, take the maiden; if thou'rt conquered, thee I slay!" . . .
Never, thou poor cheated Daphnis, never shalt thou set her free;
Never, with thy prize, beat homeward through the high exultant sea.
Even now the sun is sinking, now the shadow lengtheneth;
Woe to us and thee, O Shepherd,— this swift sickle-man is Death!

Migration

THE cagèd bird, that all the autumn day
In quiet dwells, when falls the autumn eve
Seeks how its liberty it may achieve,
Beats at the wires and its poor wings doth fray:
For now desire of migrant change holds sway;
This summer-vacant land it longs to leave,
While its free peers on tireless pinions cleave
The haunted twilight, speeding south their way.

Not otherwise than as the prisoned bird,
We here dwell careless of our captive state
Until light dwindles, and the year grows late,
And answering note to note no more is heard;
Then, our loved fellows flown, the soul is stirred
To follow them where summer has no date

VII

Thought-Drift

DIM hour by hour through autumn's wane
The silkweed lets her plumes adrift:
They rove — they sink — and yet again
Upon the wavering breeze they lift.

No count is made of where they roam;
They are not found, they are not lost,—
Soft wanderers without a home,
Yet scathless to the sworded frost.

Not otherwise dim hour by hour
I shed white thoughts into the wind,—
Sole drift of my life's vanished flower:
They are not lost — yet none may find.

Speech And Silence

THERE be whose thoughts have eagle wings of speech,
Not hampered more than is the eagle's flight,
And followed far with wonder and delight;
Their sovran sway of hearts who would impeach?
There be who never to their kind outreach,
Self-willed to silence, on some native height.
There be dumb souls whose wistful eyes, too bright,
Do like the wounded fawn's our aid beseech.

Not mute am I except by force of fate;
For I have words of fire, and swift as flame,
And words, and words, and words, in endless store,
That, leal and willing, on my thought do wait;
But I in all the world no ear may claim;
So halt at home those heralds evermore.

The Triumph Of Forgotten Things

THERE is a pity in forgotten things,
Banished the heart they can no longer fill,
Since restless Fancy, spreading swallow wings,
Must seek new pleasure still.

There is a patience, too, in things forgot;
They wait, they find the portal long unused,
And, knocking there, it shall refuse them not —
Nor aught shall be refused!

Ah, yes! though we, unheeding years on years,
In alien pledges spend the heart's estate;
They bide some blessed moment of quick tears —
Some moment without date —

Some gleam on flower or leaf or beaded dew,
Some tremble at the ear, of memoried sound
Of mother-song: they seize the slender clew —
The old loves gather round!

When that which lured us once now lureth not,
But the tired hands their gathered dross let fall,
This is the triumph of the things forgot —
To hear the tired heart call!

And they are with us at Life's farthest reach,
  A light when into shadow all else dips,
As, in the stranger's land, their native speech
  Returns to dying lips!

You Have Come Back

"YOU have come back," they say to me,
The people of the old, old town.
In speech I with their speech agree,
But doubts have I that will not down.

For more and more to me it seems
That both the village and its folk,
Whom I so oft have seen in dreams
(Have seen, then lingeringly awoke)—

Have but returned, dream-wise, again,
And as a vision will go by.
So to make answer I am fain,
"'Tis you who have come back, not I."

Old Sight

THOU never more shalt see so clear
As formerly the things a-near,
As when thy two round hills of sight
Caught all there was of heaven's light.

In youth thine eye, so true, so keen,
One leaf among its brethren green,
Keeping its dance upon the tree,
It was thy pure delight to see.

One blade of grass would catch thine eye,
One rose, 'mid roses climbing high.
Now, know them lovely in the mass,
But singly let them blend and pass.

Thine eyes are old, and they are tired;
No longer be of them required
The labor they were wont to do:
Ease them, as servants tried and true.

Still shall they serve, if thou art wise,
With longer span of earth and skies;
But know, all little things that be,
All trivial lines, must fade from thee.

Old Sight

And if the face of thine own friend
In the dense human stream shall blend,
Thine oldened sight, like arrow fine,
Pierces some farther, heavenly sign!

And dimmer still, in life's decline,
Things near thy vision shall divine;
But there shall be no veil, no bar,
Between thine eyes and things afar!

Snow-Burden

THEY bear the burden of the snow —
They bear it with a patient grace,
The drooping trees! Yet well they know
A melting hour comes on apace.

Ah, if but Time, that crowns me white,
An equal clemency would show,
Then I, some soft, mild day or night,
Would drop the burden of the snow!

Winter Sleep

I KNOW it must be winter (though I sleep) —
I know it must be winter, for I dream
I dip my bare feet in the running stream,
And flowers are many, and the grass grows deep.

I know I must be old (how age deceives!) —
I know I must be old, for, all unseen,
My heart grows young, as autumn fields grow green
When late rains patter on the falling sheaves.

I know I must be tired (and tired souls err) —
I know I must be tired, for all my soul
To deeds of daring beats a glad, faint roll,
As storms the riven pine to music stir.

I know I must be dying (Death draws near) —
I know I must be dying, for I crave
Life — life, strong life, and think not of the grave
And turf-bound silence, in the frosty year.

Insomnia

A HOUSE of sleepers — I, alone unblest,
Am yet awake and empty vigil keep.
When these, who spend life's day with me, find rest
Oh, let me not be last to fall asleep!

VIII

To The Dead

To All

WE SAY you sleep, but light your sleep, meseems;
We call ye silent, when your undertone
Threads all the world's exultance, wrath and moan,
Ye lifeful-dead, with whom this sad earth teems!
Are these your voices mixed with troubled streams?
Is this your speech, in ancient tongues unknown,
Through twilight fields and darkling wood-ways blown?
Have ye the winds of heaven to serve your schemes?

O aye-increasing, far outnumbering host,
Crowd not so close our handful-breathing clan:
This moment ye are distant but a span,
Such as Ulysses kept on that stern coast
Where round the warm libation, lips all wan,
With clamor shrill, came many a thirsting ghost!

To The Dead

To One

Thou movest in their front, serene, serene!
How smilest thou, as one not knowing yet
That he is Death's, — the rose and violet
(Not asphodel) about thy temples seen.
Now with drawn spirit-sword I stand between
Thee and the murmuring shades that so beset;
Be thy lips only with the offering wet;
Then speak! — where goest thou? where hast thou been?

In vain, in vain! for, wavering through the gloom,
Thou art become stream, forest, hill . . . and now
It is the evening star that masks thy brow.
Gone art thou, gone the rose and violet bloom,
And the unnumbered shades their sway resume:
Shall all the dead speak to me — and not thou!

From "The Inverted Torch"

I

AH, WHAT so mightless as their state,
Enfolded in the all-night's sleep,—
Sleep without dream or date!
Ah, what so mightless as their state?
Yet strange regality they keep,
As on the dim hours sweep.

Ah, what so vacant as their state,
Wherein nor wish nor thought inheres,
Nor charge of small or great!
Ah, what so vacant as their state?
Yet seem they vision-guarding seers
Of the unmeasured years.

Most unappealable those brows,
Those lips, those ears, that never failed
To our warm prayers and vows;
Most unappealable those brows
That kindred sovereignty have hailed,
Yet from our knowledge veiled.

From "The Inverted Torch"

They are no longer of our time,
But to the eldest dead allied,
  In mien estranged, sublime.
O God! they are not of our time;
So looked the first of those that died, —
  So rapt, so glorified!

II

When in the first great hour of sleep supreme
  I saw my Dearest fair and tranquil lie,
  Swift ran through all my soul this wonder-cry:
"How hast thou met and vanquished hate extreme!"
For by thy faint white smiling thou didst seem,
  Sweet Magnanimity! to half defy,
  Half pity, those ill things thou hadst put by,
That are the haunters of our life's dim dream.

Pain, error, grief, and fear — poor shadows all,
  I, to thy triumph caught, saw fail and fade.
Yet as some muser, when the embers fall,
  The low lamp flickers out, starts up dismayed,
So I awoke, to find me still Time's thrall,
  Time's sport, — nor by thy warm safe presence stayed.

From "The Inverted Torch"

III

Thou hadst not slept an hour of that last sleep
  When my soul woke to know what it had lost,
  And met the shining face of what thou wast,
Whom time can touch no more, nor earth can keep.
Thine eyes with love upfilled, unfathomed deep!
  Thine eyes reproachless still! — ah, therefore most
  My soul did with reproach itself accost,
And bid mine eyes to ache for grief, not weep.

Thou, grateful-glad of every gladding thing,
  Love's least return, and each white truce to care!
For this my soul did lodge the sharpest sting,—
  Because thou hadst of these such lenten share.
But thou departedst, unremembering,
  A vanisher in griefless light and air.

IV

On the day of earth thy last,
Up my spirit rose aghast,
For there came — a legion throng —
All our days in summer long,
All the days so gently paced,
All the days with favor graced,
All the beauteous days we passed,
Mindless there should come The Last.

From "The Inverted Torch"

All the days, from morn till noon,
With the evening's sweeter boon,—
All for Love's full showing meant,
Yet what part in silence spent!
Lips to speak,— yet most and best
In the heart left unexpressed!
Lips to speak,— such days in fee,—
Now what stores should voicèd be!

Still my spirit stood aghast,
For the days, as they drew past,
Strove each one its weight to cast
On that frail and speechless Last!

V

I left the home whence thou before hadst passed.
  One moment in the gliding landscape shone
  The mornward hill-verge, winter-pale and lone,
Where thou for dreamless sleep thy chamber hast.
Oh, then I saw thee as I saw thee last
  (All fair, desiring nought, and envying none),
  Save now above thee winter's fleeces strown,
And round thee calm, oblivious earth upcast.

From "The Inverted Torch"

I left the home whence thou hadst passed before.
  The swift train on through day and darkness hurled:
But yet thy hill its mournful summit bore
  'Mong woods and heights and clouds confusèd
    whirled,—
Thy little dome of earth forevermore
  Magnetic centre of my shattered world!

VI

Threading a darksome passage all alone,
The taper's flame, by envious current blown,
Crouched low, and eddied round, as in affright,
So challenged by the vast and hostile night,
Then down I held the taper; — swift and fain
Up climbed the lovely flower of light again!

Thou Kindler of the spark of life divine,
Be henceforth the Inverted Torch a sign
That, though the flame beloved thou dost depress,
Thou wilt not speed it into nothingness;
But out of nether gloom wilt reinspire,
And homeward lift the keen empyreal fire!

Why Wilt Thou Visit In Dreams?

I QUESTIONED them narrowly, all,
If any went out or in:
And they answered me, wondering, all,
That no one went out or in.

Why wilt thou visit in dreams?—
Once with a little harp
Held up in thy hands to play,
And thy down-smiling eyes on my face.
But when I would raise me to hear,
There was only the wind so lone—
And the wind was thy harp and thou.

Why wilt thou visit in dreams?
Once with a tendrilled wreath
Hung over thy rounded arm,
As though thou wert fain to dance.
But when I would watch thee at dance,
The vine at the casement swung low—
And the vine was thy wreath and thou.

Why wilt thou visit in dreams?
Once with a lamp of pure light
Wherein things hidden were clear.
But when I would walk by thy light,
Only the westering moon—
The low moon at my window, looked in—
And the moon was thy lamp and thou.

Why Wilt Thou Visit In Dreams?

Why wilt thou visit in dreams?
Once with a cup that o'erflowed
With a draught that could heal, could save,
But when I would whisper, "I thirst!"
Only the fountain I heard,
The laugh of the fountain by night —
And the fountain was thou and thy cup.

I questioned them narrowly, all,
If any went out or in;
And they answered me, wondering, all,
That no one went out or in.

Lone Freedom

HOW lonely is vast Freedom! I may go,
Or come, or sit in the still house of thought,
All idleness, unseeking and unsought,
From the gray morn to noon, to evening's glow;
None shall reprove, if vacant hands I show,
Or question why the task remains unwrought;
Or done, or never done, 'twill be as naught,
To every creature on the earth below.

How lonely is vast Freedom! I were fain
To follow any who would be my liege;
To say, "Do this," or, "To the world's end ride!"
I am as he who once sought all in vain
To enter his loved city, in her siege;
"How lone is Freedom!" at her gate he cried.

The Onlookers

THEY are withdrawn — and they are near;
No eyes — they see; no ears — they hear;
They speak together, without sound —
They Who Look On while Time runs round!

I know not where their place, their stand,
Nor of the distance that is spanned,
When they their influence impart —
They Who Look On and ease my heart.

They ease my heart, for they can take
From Life all fever, all heart-ache;
In any crowd or turmoil rude,
They Who Look On make Quietude.

And sweetly do they send reproof
To turn me from world-pride aloof;
Nor any scorn can strike, nor hate —
They Who Look On so guard my state!

Not safer was the hero caught
In the bright veil Love round him wrought
To bear him from the press of foes —
They Who Look On thus round me close.

The Onlookers

I deem they will abide with me;
Perchance, apparent they will be
When I shall breathe my last of breath . . .
They Who Look On have looked past Death.

Rotation

O ALL ye myriads in the ages dead,
Princes and peoples great in power and trust,
And great in love,—all dwindled to fine dust!
Must wolfish Time with such as you be fed,
That living men awhile may keep ahead
Upon the bitter road, where ill and just
Hear, as they run, the hollow panting gust
From fangs of hunger never surfeited?

No! live again, brave world (I would have said),
Nor for our vantage in the breach be cast,—
I could have wept for pity of you, dead,
But I remembered our own fate instead,—
How, to the age that springs before us fast,
We shall become the sacrificial past.

IX

The Underland

IT IS so glad a land,
It is so sad a land,
Where now I go to make my fast retreat.
Once I but tarried there,
Now I have carried there
All my soul's treasure and will build my seat.

It is so sad a land,
It is so glad a land,
I know not if it be more sad or glad.
No word is spoken there
That can be broken there,
And — grief or joy, we have what we have had.

A blaze is on the hearth,
It plays upon the hearth
And on the brows of some that sit thereby.
It leaps for aye the same
It keeps for aye the same —
Flitting from laughing lip to speaking eye.

Outside a garden blooms,
In pride a garden blooms;
Nowhere so deep the grass, so bright the rose.
No blessed hour departs,
Nor leaf nor flower departs —
But never any bud can there unclose.

I go to hide me there,
Since none will chide me there,
And say, "Get hence, for here no part thou hast."
It is the only place,—
This peopled, lonely place,
That is my own — and it is called The Past.

To you so lately gone,
So sternly, straightly gone,
Without a word, without a waving hand —
To you I send this song,
And you, befriend this song,
Who make great brightness in The Underworld!

The House

I WAS leaving the House behind,
And it said, as I crossed the sill:
"Because he is gone from me,
Forever and ever gone,
You too must be forth and away!
You cannot bear me, you cry —
The listening — the silence — the void!
But how shall I bear myself,
Who cannot arise and go,
And be free of the silence that asks,
That listens, and asks again —
And be free of the void that aches?

"How shall I bear myself?
As full of sweet memories, I,
As of honey the autumn hive —
But the sweet of my honey stings!
Where now are his hat and his coat
That hung in the hall by the door,
And the good cane leaned beside,
That was used to the feel of his hand,
That was warm with the clasp of his hand?
They are taken and hidden away;
But the place where they were still asks:
'Why must I lose what was mine?'

"And the pen that none other might touch,
And the letter half written, and left;
And the book at the head of the bed,
Where the late lamp loved to shine
(The book that was old and good),
With the leaves that he slowly turned,
With the leaves that he loved the best;
And the reading-glass slipped between!
They are all put by, put by;
But I know, though they hide, where they are —
I am full of keen memories, I,
As of arrows the saint in the shrine!

"How shall I bear myself?"
Said the House that was left behind.
"How shall I bear myself?"
Said the haunting Voice of the House,
As over the sill I passed.
And the Voice was the silence that asks,
That listens, and asks again;
And the Eyes were the windows that gazed,
That gazed at me long and hard,
And wondered that I went forth.
"Nevertheless, O House,
I must leave you — must go," I said.

Grief's Stratagem

IN HELEN'S house (Ulysses counted dead)
The hearts of all by sorrow's wave were swept,
And host and guests, unshamed, together wept,
Yet wept not all for great Ulysses sped:
Though plenteous tears the youth from Pylos shed,
Seizing the tearful chance like grief's adept,
He mourned his own, his brother dear, who slept
Where hostile soil with best Greek blood was fed.

Thus I — if fortune would so far befriend
To hither bring some spirit scourgèd sore,
Some wrong that loudly knocks at pity's door —
Might seem in charity those tears to spend,
That otherwise I dare not let descend
To ease my heart of grief's occulted store!

From Lips Of Stone

AMID a waste and solitary field,
Upon the twilight boundary of the day,
Upspake the timeless flintstone huge and gray:
"Why should my counsel be forever sealed?
To thee an ancient truth shall be revealed —
To thee, a wavering mortal, brief of stay: —
Something of kin,— thou piece of passioned clay,
Art thou and I, whom passion ne'er did wield;

For, lo! did not Deucalion at the flood
Behind him fling us stones — and men we grew?
With limbs we moved abroad, with lips we spake!
And hast not thou, with grief, seen flesh-and-blood
Become to thee as stones, that Pity's dew
Could never melt, nor yet thine anger break?"

Shield Me, Dark Nurse

SHIELD me, dark nurse,— outworn, defeated, and undone!
Shield me from memories sweet or bitter 'neath the sun;
From glance of scorn, from love's long gaze, from pity's tear,
Shield me alike from blame, from praise, from hope, from fear!
Shield me, dark nurse, with charm and woven pace surround,
Shield me from sight, from sound,— from dream of sight or sound!

Out Of It All

OUT of it all . . . and now I see clearly
How little there was that touched me nearly.
Though I hated (how idly!) and loved (how dearly!),
Though I deemed this great, and judged that small;
Now the bounds I set are a crumbled wall —
Out of it — out of it all!

Out of the years that lagged, or hasted,
Out of the power of the griefs that wasted,
Out of the sway of the joys that, half-tasted,
Leave the heart sick, that so soon they can pall —
Out of the drive, the tumult, the brawl,
Out of it — out of it all!

Out of it all . . . And the world receding,
Who, or what, is there, whither leading?
Through a space unknown, I, unknown, am speeding,
And the fashions that were, away from me fall . . .
What was that word I would fain recall? —
"Out of it — out of it all!"

The Old Soul

THE Old Soul came from far,
Beyond the unlit bound;
There had gone out a star
And a great world was drowned,
Since birth and death and birth
Were hers, upon the earth.

For she had robed anew
Time and time out of mind;
And, as the sphere of dew
Unshapes into the wind,
Her raiment oft had cast
Into the wasting past.

There was no dizzying height
She had not sometime trod,
No dungeon known of night
But she had felt its rod;
The saint, assoiled from sin —
And saint's arch-foe — had been!

At cruel feasts she sate,
Where heartless mirth ran high;
Through famine's portal strait
Had fled her wailful cry;
All human fates had proved,
And those from man removed.

The Old Soul

Yea, she had worn the guise
  Of creatures lashed and spurned —
Even of those whose eyes
  May not on heaven be turned;
No house too dark or base
To be her tarrying place!

The Old Soul came from far;
  And, all lives having known,
She nowhere touched a bar,
  But all was as her own:
And this could none forget
Who once her look had met!

The Old Soul came from far,
  Moving through days and ways
That are not — and that are!
  She turned on all her gaze —
Illumed,— deceived,— illumed;
Yet still the road resumed.

The Old Soul came from far,
  And toward the far she drew.
"Turn home, mine avatar!"
  That voice, long lost, she knew;
She heard, she turned — was free —
No more to dream, but Be!

The Two Tides

To E. M.

CHILD, I beheld thee, one night, swept in by the Tide
on this known shore of Being;
Naked thou wert, and unfain to be here, and thine eyes
were averse to all seeing;
Bitter and small was thy first-uttered cry, and filled with
unnamed desolation —
Thou, so encompassed by Love and by Joy in their mar-
veling proud salutation!

Child, in thy turn, thou shalt see me, rapt by the refluent
tide swiftly flowing;
All sound shall be stopped from these lips save only the
last sigh of breath in outgoing;
The face thou shalt watch will grow strange, the word
thou wouldst hear — it shall not be spoken!
Then shalt thou sweep the dim seas for a beacon, and
storm the locked heavens for token!

The Two Tides

O child, in that hour of the Ebb, left alone on the ignorant shore, crying, "Whither?"
I charge thee, Remember, naught didst thou know of the Tide that once brought thee hither,
Loath to thine heritage — thou, the darling of Life, whom the banquet invited;
So much, and no more dost thou know, what awaiteth the outbound pilgrim benighted,
What sovereignty royal — what dream beatific fulfilled in Youth's restoration —
What galaxy crowding in welcome — what guest-rites — what marveling proud salutation!

Inclusion

I SHALL not care if I shall live no more,
As men know life, as I myself have known.
The waves that race so hard to reach the shore —
They break, and backward to their deep are thrown.
They are not, yet they are — become the Sea . . .
I lose my life, but Life will not lose me!

I shall not care if I shall love no more,
As time knows love, and, ah, as I have known!
The fire goes out and open lies the door
When summer's high ascendant sun has shone . . .
My little fire of love burned bright, burned free —
How greater, midst the Sun of Love to be!

Poems

Hitherto Uncollected

I

We Are Old

WE ARE old — it must be so,
Oft they say it — they who know·
Care they not what we could tell!
Age with age companions well:
Walk a little way with me,
Talk, if so it pleases thee,
Talk of that which is — or seems!
If we both fall into dreams
So the rest is never told,
Does it matter? We are old.

Walk a little way with me —
Short enough the way will be:
One of us, some time, shall start,
Finding more than dreams depart.
Round the lone one then will fold
Deeper shadows. We are old.

The Reflection

IT WAS the eve my mother died.
The bowl with water had been set;
The candle shone, the bier beside —
The room, I see it yet!

Above the bowl I chanced to lean;
The water like a mirror lay —
My mother's face therein was seen!
Half-wild I turned away.

And long my tears flowed unassuaged . . .
But now I know, since years are gone,
It was my face I saw — but aged,
With lines of sorrow drawn!

Nameless Tears

CLIMBING slow hour by hour to Rigi's crest,
At last beneath our widened vision lay
How many a village, farm, and lone chalet,
One sunshine mile below — in silent rest!
The hawk in spirals rising to his nest
I saw beneath me! . . . Then, I drew away;
My throat choked, and wild tears I could not stay,
My mortal with immortal there possessed!

It seemed that I for this alone had climbed
To meet strange exaltation on a height,
In thin air giddy, drunken with great light —
Mere creature of a moment, but sublimed!
How often have I sought to live again
That moment out of Time: but sought in vain.

The Etherial Hunger

I HAVE been hungry all my days —
(Oh, when shall I be fed?)
They saw my pinched and wistful gaze,
And some there were gave wine and bread,
And some gave love and praise.

I was as hungry as before —
(Oh, when shall I be fed?)
Good souls! they shared their choicest store,
Another had been surfeited —
I did but hunger more.

I am an ingrate in all eyes —
(Oh, when shall I be fed?)
From their best feasts I famished rise,
I dream of tables ampler spread —
O tables of the skies!

EDITH M. THOMAS
AT TWENTY YEARS

The Lyric Muse Speaks

I HAD a hunger nothing filled;
But pity not, for so 'twas willed:
The Blessed struck from out my palms
Whatever dole of kindly alms!
It was a sign that I must know
How all Earth's unfed children go —
How bravely, for they ply their tasks
Above a want that asks and asks!

I was a singer in the streets,
My song — I timed it to the beats
Of one great heart that shook through all.
Oh, none so quick to hear its call,
Oh, none so pitying of its cry —
Yet none so pitiless as I
Who knew a hunger nothing filled,
Whose inward cry could not be stilled!

It was from hunger that I sang,
My song was of the hunger-pang!
The famished, on each side, drew near,
Among themselves they smiled to hear
So perfectly their want made known!
Their thanks were choral undertone;
For them I broke my song as bread —
They caught the fragments and were fed.

The rich sent bidding to their feasts;
Yet others haled me to their priests
To exorcise that spell unblest
Wherewith they deemed I was oppressed!
But Hunger was my heritage,
And Hunger was my heavenly wage —
To nevermore be satisfied,
To wander singing till I died!

Faithful Over A Few Things

ALL that was mine — I have loved it, and loved it both true and well.
Quick to its call I uprose, as the heart to the sacring-bell.
Never so long ago, nor aught that I loved as a child,
And lost, but I love it still and would seek it unreconciled.
Never so far past by, that broken its image appears,
Blent with dissolving visions or dim in the rush of the years!
Never so cast away, flung out on the world's rough wake,
But only the more would I love it — at need would go down for its sake.

All that was mine — I have loved it. Had greater than this been mine,
I know not how greater my love — how mounting nearer divine.
All that was mine in the world — its Maker my witness be!
I loved it, and love it still, as I leave it and pass unto Thee.
If more and greater than this be my share, in some Heaven above,
The soul that was mine will live on, and measure its life by its love.

Eques Temerarius

HE RODE — it was his joy to ride,
For he was great and rash of soul!
And there was none to let or guide
For him who held a star his goal.

He rode — he rode to right a wrong!
It was enough — he could not stay!
Whoever fell, his path along,
The Rider still must keep his way.

He rode — he rode free and aloof!
A steed he rode of heavenly race:
The flint-fire flashing from the hoof —
It flashed upon my fallen face!

What then? He hath attained his star,
He hath achieved his heart-sworn trust:
He mounts to where Immortals are;
But I am dust — blown on with dust!

He rode. His heart was rash and strong.
Let fall the unjust and the just!
He rode — he rode to right a wrong;
He spurned the earth — he spurned this dust!

Eques Temerarius

I have no voice, save as the wind
  Will cry for me, cry far and wide!—
Will say, "There was no ruth to bind—
  It was the Rider's joy to ride!"

While I Live

YOU are no more than yonder star
In worldly place or speech or deed;
To you no longer men give heed,
You are no more — and yet, you are!

For while I live you live in me;
The all-I-am I will upraise,
Not for myself, to win world praise —
That you may more exalted be!

And when they see me upward go,
"His soul indwelling," I will say,
"Breathes fiery power and points the way,"
But you — Oh, will you care or know!

Old Wells

Do not fill up old wells—Proverb.

THOUGH you forget to love,
Love is a living thing —
An ill unmeasured comes
If you choke up the spring.

They sent me on a day
To fill an ancient well:
If there had been a house
None now remained to tell.

But all amid the grass
I found a myrtle spray
And a bitter scent of box
Rose up along the way.

A well — without a sweep
Nor was there left a curb;
A warped plank lay across
Half hid in struggling herb.

Deep down the water gleamed
A buried pane of blue
That cracked athwart like glass
At the first earth I threw.

And the first earth I threw —
  It had the grave-clod's sound
And something seemed alive
  That cried far underground!

But I began to sing
  My gloomy thoughts to save;
The song became the croon
  Of one who digs a grave.

I bent me to my task,
  I hurled the brown earth in —
But suddenly around
  There was a murmured din!

I lifted up mine eyes,
  The heart within me sunk —
They all stood round about
  Who ever there had drunk!

With asking looks they leaned,
  "Give us to drink — we thirst!"
And then I learned that he
  Who fills a well is cursed.

They were — and were not — ay,
  They vanished as they came,
As though the noon should drop
  Upon a candle-flame.

Old Wells

Sweet, though — you love no more,
Do not quite close your heart,
So that no place is mine,
Lest Ghosts of Memory start.

II

Fabrique Of Things Spent

ALL must have Beauty, else they pine and die.
Some to possess her the far quest must lead,
Ascend Olympus and invade the sky!
I will create the Beauty that I need
Out of spent things that disregarded lie,
From every mundane use dismissed and freed.

Give me your dust, O delicate gone things
That were so worshipped in the ascendent year,
That now the harpy gust befouling flings
Under their feet who have nor love nor fear.
Give me the moultings from yon wonder wings
And I to Heliopolis will steer
And find the phœnix at those crimson springs
Where he renews him on his cradle-bier!

I will take shard and wave-shot laminae
Of shells that lie along the slope-brown sand,
Housings of life, scarce more than foam of sea
That shaped them, whirling — whirling would disband.
Bring the long ribbons of the dulse to me,
These will I braid together, strand by strand.

Fabrique Of Things Spent

Bring me but from the cottage hearth a toll
  Of filmy ash that gives soft death to fire,
Like a gray moss o'ergrowing the live coal
  Until its substance it has wormed entire,
Within such driftage there abides a soul
  Will recreate itself at my desire.

So now I warp my loom and sit to weave,
  Shuttle in hand, the woof I seek alone.
But I will take whatso the rest would leave —
  Treasurable once but now unvalued grown.
I, that come after, riches will I sheave
  In the waste fields where careless ones have sown.
All must have Beauty — but I can retrieve
  The lovely semblance when ye say 'tis flown!

To Walk Invisible

"We have the receipt of fern-seed; we walk invisible."

I SMILE — yet better might I sigh than smile —
At my young waywardness that wished to try
"Receipt of fern-seed"; for some little while
To walk unseen of any prying eye.
I said 'twas but detachment that I sought,
To better know my own good comrade, Thought.

I added, I had made, must keep, the tryst
With Beauty, who had counseled Solitude —
I would be back again ere I was missed;
Whoever loved me would indulge my mood,
Nor would they strive the veiling charm to break,
Nor turn aside my hidden path to take.

And then, I moved untroubled by the crowd.
I softly stepped, and silence lapped me round.
I was but young — God knows I was not proud!
My venture was to me enchanted ground
Where I might pass unseen, but, soon as fain,
Into my human world return again.

I went my way, I kept me far from sight,
From jostling touch and ill-timed greeting free . . .
I, who was more beholden to the night
Than any charm that could sequester me!
Now, deeper night and elder solitude
Begin to close around my errant mood.

To Walk Invisible

And when I walk invisible, indeed,
  Who knows, I may the genius be of all
Who out of trodden ways their spirit lead?
  Then I will answer to their lonely call
Who, straying, have strayed wider than they wist,
Who walk invisible — and are not missed.

Revenant

I HAVE returned — so many times a ghost
Whom still elusive Memory pursues
With hint of many a sea and many a coast
I have adventured on in my long cruise.

I have returned. Yet none, at sight of me,
Cries out: "Why dost thou walk these ways again,
Since, being spirit, thou wert surely free,
And all among the Blessed couldst remain?"

I have returned. For free I am not yet —
Where was it taught me that I must return,
As one who goes unlightened of some debt,
And seeks, each way, how he may payment earn?

I have forgotten where or how incurred —
That debt which still from life to life I bear.
But, like a bond, unto the Final Word,
It shall be paid — and I need take no care.

I have returned. Nor am I sad or glad
To be once more in this old House of Earth;
I repossess all that I erstwhile had,
Save this—and this—and this,—too little worth.

Revenant

I have returned. For it was in the Scheme . . .
But when I meet thee, Best-beloved, I start,
As though, awakening, one might hold one's dream,
For, in whatever life I move, thou art!

I have returned. And thou, too, hast returned.
Thou dost not know this truth, nor ever may.
Be Love as a sweet lesson newly learned —
Though learned by me our farthest natal day!

Gates Of Unremembrance

COULD we but guess, beyond the gates-on-gates,
Who waits!
Who sowed that misty acreage,— our own,
Unknown;
Whereof the casual sheaves our garners fill
With Good and Ill!
Could we but guess,— we scarce would claim as ours
These gifts and powers —
But oh, ourselves in full we might forgive,
And live!
Could we but know — past each ascending gate
Is Fate;
And nothing can we do, for there she stands
With shaping hands!

My Last Estate

I CAME — I know not through how many a gate,
A long, long way; not early and not late,
When I arrived unto my Last Estate.

I found me stripped of all I had before,
The dross, the husks, that once I held as store —
My naked affluence needed these no more.

No eyes, when past the final gate I drew —
Yet had I sight, to pierce things through and through;
Nor ears — I needed not to hear: I knew!

I servants had before. Now, none did wait;
Fulfilled was all desire — on instant date . . .
Oh, naked affluence of my Last Estate!

The Unawakened

I HAVE been sleeping all my years —
How well I know it — deep asleep!
I have dreamed pleasures, toil and tears,
And loves I could — or would — not keep!
There is one thing my sleep could break —
If any touched me I would wake!

I have been sleeping all my years.
Around me many came and went;
Their voices lightly brushed my ears,
Sooth tones, or tones of discontent,
Pleading for love's or pity's sake —
If any touched me I would wake!

I have been sleeping all my years.
I dreamed I was not loath to do,
To dare high things among my peers,
To mount where fewer grow the few;
Yes, oft I dreamed the heights to take —
If any touched me I would wake!

I have been sleeping all my years.
I dreamed that others, too, have slept,
Although where shifting fortune steers,
They turned and turned, the pace they kept!
In all no meaning could I make —
If any touched me I would wake!

The Unawakened

I have been sleeping all my years.
  But, as in dreams past turn of night,
The finger of the morn appears,
  I have one dream that, catching light,
Leaves the dim spirit less opaque —
If any touched me I would wake!

I have been sleeping all my years —
  Yet no! Not if this dream is true,
That somewhere (be it past the spheres!)
  Some part of me sleep never knew:
One Touch the House of Life will shake —
One Touch — and all of me shall wake!

The Days That Remain

THEY will not be so long from dawn to dark,
The few, — the golden-few days that remain!
They will not see the red rose laugh again,
And in their morning skies will be no lark.
Hope will not run, a wild-fire, from the spark
The fervid Hours may scatter in their train.
They will not be so rich in joy or pain;
But no despair of theirs shall loom so stark!

The few, the priceless-few days that remain,
Ere I upon the unknown Deep embark,
I bend to them, and to their speech I hark —
The wild bright days that were they can explain!
Yet there be those who pity when they mark
How I do prize the few days that remain!

Hours And Graces

HOW long they have been passing by my place!
As in a frieze antique they trained along.
Alternately an Hour and then a Grace,
How many vanished of that drifting throng!
The first I knew not — scarce shall know the last;
But each has wrought its change as on it passed.

Hostile the Hours — but this how could I know?
Each from a secret quiver drew a dart,
Frowning or smiling on me, aimed its blow.
Ofttimes 'twas long ere I would feel the smart;
Although a slow corrosion, working still,
Might leave a wasting wound in soul or will.

Hostile the Hours, for so Time missioned them;
But every Grace aboundingly was kind,
And brought a gift, of flower, or sunlit gem,
Nepenthe in a glass, or balm to bind
And lull the deepest hurt within Time's power —
Almost for this I loved the wounding Hour.

The Hours and Graces — now they grow a dream,
A frieze antique the unseen Fates unwind,
That into shadow dips or catches gleam.
Hostile the Hours, but every Grace is kind —
I doubt not kindest of them all, for me,
The Grace that softens the last Hour shall be.

The Good Furies

FROM time to time I meet with those who cry
Peccavi, and the bitter cup still drink
For errors of a season long gone by;
Though once I held with them, this now I think —

At last is outlawed one's account for sins,
The thorn of conscience — let it cease to turn!
'Tis then a time of thankfulness begins;
We find some gifts our virtues could not earn!

Read how Orestes, years of torment done,
Felt suddenly withdrawn the Furies' goad:
'Twas when Athene and Latona's son
Checked those pursuers, and compassion showed.

On Ares' Hill the Furies' temple stood:
Orestes, now his spirit filled with ease,
Their altar wreathed with flowers and called them Good —
The favoring, the kind, Eumenides!

Can I do less than he — young Greek of old?
How well I know what felt that fugitive
Who could not with his torturing memories hold,
Nor yet without them had he learned to live!

Oh, let them be my friends, who were my dread,
With several lash for every ill thing done —
Whose brazen feet pursued where'er I fled,
Whose torch lit up whatever shade I won!

Drop, scourge, at last — and heavy hand, uplift! . . .
  Now, since they send me such abounding ease,
Should I not bring to them some little gift —
  The favoring, the kind, Eumenides?

What I have done amiss must so remain,
  Not mine to longer grieve therefor, or brood;
Both sins and lashes have not been in vain;
  I call my own departing Furies "*Good*"!

This have I written for those souls who still
  Peccavi cry — because their sins were sore,
When better they might climb the templed hill,
  And carry there their flowers — and grieve no more!

They Who Have Failed Us

THEY who have failed us — ah, the searching hurt
No forethought could avert!
But they who failed us did not fall away
To-day nor yesterday;

But very long ago, had we but seen,
The shadow fell between;
A rift, a little rift that still must grow —
'Twas there, full long ago!

Ay, long ago as birth began that flaw
Which Fate the spinner saw!
Oh, they who failed us, long ago they failed;
Naught we might do availed.

Their being's law, more dominant than they,
Marked out their cleaving way;
And they must part from us, if those more kin
Their fealties could win.

They who have failed us, failed not their own law
When thus they did withdraw.
Ask, ere their memories should be assailed,
"*Who is it I have failed?*

"Perchance I know it not, yet they in me
May but a recreant see —
A truth, a light they loved in me has paled —
Who is it I have failed?"

Saith Instinct

OH, do not seek — but find,
And do not look, but see;
Lay by the sophist mind,
Nor strive at all, but be.

And do not learn, but know —
And whither wouldst thou fare?
Arrive, but do not go,
Be There in Everywhere.

The tree knows not of time,
Yet hath its runic rings;
The woodbird cons no rhyme,
But all in tune it sings.

III

Sun Of March

WITH fanfare and with tantivy
The chasing winds swept past;
The night was wild as night could be
But fell in hush at last.

Dawn! and the Sun of March began
To pace across the sky;
No longer by the shortened span
Of wintry days gone by.

The journeying orb was clothed upon
With subtile-spun array:
It was, of light, the eidolon
Amid a doubtful day.

Now, like the thinnest wafer shone,
Behind a cloud-film gray;
And now, it seemed the moon, all wan,
In heaven gone astray!

But, swimming up the heightened arch,
It pierced the veiling mist —
Lo, how the Silver Sun of March
With silver all things kissed!

Sun Of March

Silver upon the waking streams
  And dipping willow-spray;
Old stubble-fields caught silver gleams —
  Old farm-roofs far away!

And there was no obscurest spot
  But had its magic gleam . . .
The Silver Sun of March — it shot
  A white ray on my dream!

The Revisitant

GO NOT alone when that elfin thing
Revisits the earth — the Early Spring!
She is a mocker, a teasing mime
Bringing another world and time.

Her voice is only the air around,
Or a long light whisper along the ground;
But, all unaware, she will make you start
At secret names she draws up from your heart!

She can change to-day into yesterday,
And the near at hand into far away;
She can shake the blue mist on the hills into tears
To eyes whose regard is on other years.

I met her but now in the unleafed wood;
She looked like a child as before me she stood,
And I saw she was wearing those pale first flowers
I had gathered and dropped in my own childhood hours!

Rain And Sleep

THE winds in Spring how many a shower upblow!
These are the tears that freshen as they go;
And if, at night, they tap upon the pane,
A flowerful morning follows after rain.

The winds in Spring such easeful showers upblow;
But in a later time it is not so . . .
If I were young again, then I would weep:
My pillow is unwet — I turn to sleep.

A Minor Note In Spring

OH, YES, I heard the call
That, sounding through the world, wakes sleepers all!
I felt my spirit run,
With yours, to hilltop altars of the sun;
But there, my tribute paid,
Another mood my pagan joy o'erlaid —
I have a mind to sing
The Spacious Loneliness of Early Spring.
And you shall feel it, too —
Out underneath the searching, cloudless blue.

Yon woods, how far away!
No green thought yet hath crept among the gray;
Yon heavens are too bright
For those old fields that ache against the light,
Until beneath a woof
Of tremulous misty air they draw aloof.
Wakes yonder any sound?—
Within the charmèd distances, 'tis drowned! . . .
But now a dead leaf's stir
Can wake how many a voice of those that were!

And nothing now seems near
Save memories of many a vernal year!
And, if those years shall be
Too many, from their hauntings you will flee,
And thankfully will turn
Indoors, where yet some genial embers burn;
Drive out the inthrust chill,
With those left in your lot who love you still;
And closer to them cling,
Amid the Loneliness of Early Spring.

Psyche Laughs

ALL we on whom the Muse compulsion lays —
We have our days and days!
And hence, with but the slightest cause, or no,
In glorious fettle go.
Or, with as little reason, drag along
Weft of our Wings of Song.
Thus is the Soul — frail Sovereign of Sense —
O'erruled, she knows not whence!

My mood that day was of a vague distress
At my Soul's helplessness —
So weak a thing, so all inadequate
Even to the kindest fate!
And as I stepped that morning down the street,
Her type I seemed to meet —
Upon the cobbled pave a butterfly,
Child of the sunrise sky,
Yet dimmed, as though with drench of morning dew,
Its wings of splendid hue.
Oh, for a flower's touch in my fingertip,
Beneath its wings to slip,
To carry to some soft-strewn couch to die
This beauty from on high!
(To mine enlisted and self-pitying heart
Its own best counterpart.)

Psyche Laughs

When I would touch — with touch made flower-light —
Uprose that radiant sprite,
And took, in curving line, its street of air,
Its path to Anywhere,
A wanderer through the subtle element
For which its wings were lent.
And, if were ever laughter to the eye,
Then laughed that butterfly.
Till all its flickering mirth, quite past my sight,
Dissolved in native light.
Or was it but my Soul that laughed in me —
Like frail — like safe — like free?
Seeing her humorous symbol float away,
She could not sulking stay.

Bien-être

IT COMES at will, but not my will —
A moment of well-being:
From boding fear and bonding ill
There is a perfect freeing.

No inmost bough in windless woods,
No sylvan lake unbrushed by swallow,
No dewdrop where old shadow broods
And wasting noonday cannot follow, —
Could have of utter peace
Such an unbroken lease
As, at this moment, I —
So deep in peace I do not ask, or reason, why.

No hearkener to the chorded shell
That brought the Appollonian vision,
Nor saint whose prayer-encompassed cell
Gave, suddenly, on space elysian, —
Has been so wholly blest,
Of mortal so divest,
As, at this moment, I —
It is as one, if I should live, if I should die!

Bien-être

No pilgrim when the Mecca-goal
Unveiled to his rapt eyes and eager,
No lover whose keen-watching soul
At last saw ended Love's long leaguer,—
Knew rapture more supreme,
(Lord of his dearest dream)
Than, at this moment, I—
O Joy-with-Peace, in whose unfathomed depth I lie!

Noon Of The Year

NOW have I done with pipings at the Dawn,
Or sombre chords for Evening of the Year:
Now into yon bright throng I will be drawn
Who let their voices out for Summer cheer.
Life, *Life*, they sing, who cannot know a fear,
Who think it shall be theirs — eternal boon!
O Nature, let me not recall the sere;
Tauten my heartstrings till they be atune
Like these, thy latest-born, to sing the Year's High Noon!

'Tis all at her behest, who fills each chalice
With wine that hath been twelve months ripening,
And she hath made of Earth a sumptuous palace.
This, this, to June! Drink, every soul, and sing
Until the fresh-trimmed greenwood rafters ring,
And even dark pines with silvery gray festoon!
June only asks, as sacrifice, we bring
Care, Fret and Grief, the mortal's plague triune,
And cast them in her lustral fire — the Fire of Noon.

Noon Of The Year

In spiraling ecstasy the meadow bird
  Makes upward — self and song, to greet the sun;
And where is set the apple's globe, is heard
  The bubbling of the wren's trill, never done,
  (Oh, sweeter never than while raindrops run
Down the scored bark!) And, in the nights with moon,
  Comes from half-wakened thrush its orison,
Or blissful memory of its nesting rune:
Such voices serve the altar of the Year's High Noon.

A dizzying wave sweeps through the blowing grain!
  The choric trees their unbound locks advance;
Even the little hills shake out their mane
  Of grasses plumed and flowers of golden glance:
  All swim together as in swirling trance!
You scarce shall trace her by her flashing shoon,
  But 'tis June's way — the call *to dance, to dance!*
Sent on the ruffling breeze; and then, as soon,
Shall all again fall slumbering in the Year's High Noon.

IV

Thalassa

HE CAME with us from inland to the shore —
A stranger, yet that moment he came home!
The moving phalanx with the plumes of foam —
He cried that he had seen it all before;
And words he spoke that now are heard no more —
"O Thalassa, I will no longer roam;
But here will I prepare a hecatomb,
Who have come back to thee whom I adore!"

Then prone he threw himself upon the sand,
In rapt idolatry, or swooned with joy.
And we who followed him amazed did stand
Till each began of other to demand:
"Could this be one that headed out for Troy,
Or sailed Propontis to the Colchian land?"

Honey Of Trebizond

PERHAPS you touched the sirens' isle,
You stopped your ears, sailed far beyond;
Perhaps you shunned Calypso's wile
And Circe's all-transforming wand,
But have you been at Trebizond?

And did you of its honey eat —
A taste, at first, then more, and more!
'Tis wild, but it is passing sweet;
No tended hives such nectar store,
Nor richer Hebe's cup can pour.

The bees work madly, hour by hour,
And honey brims the amber comb;
The mad bees make it from a flower
That has the blush of sunset foam;
And nowhere else is found its home.

They, too, that eat thereof are mad!
They weep — and yet no grief is theirs;
They laugh — none knows if they are glad;
They brood — but they can have no cares;
And to strange gods they lift strange prayers.

They rave; they breathe out vaunting words
  That can command the sacred Nine!
Then beauty flows, and strength upgirds;
  Almost the mortal they resign,
  And have themselves become divine!

To each his passion is more dear
  Than any call of love or home . . .
I hunger, after many a year,
  For honey from that amber comb,
  And fain would beat the far sea foam,

To search if there they yet abide
  Who would not snap the sorcerous bond;
If, couched upon some green hill side,
  They have their waking visions fond —
  Or do but *sleep* at Trebizond.

Epimenides

WHEN from grief's long swoon we wake,
Nearest things, not greatest, shake.

Epimenides, they say,
Fell asleep, one summer day,
While in Crete his flock he kept;
And for seventy years he slept,
While his flock, untended aye,
In white bones around him lay —
All, as they were charmwise bound,
Never seen, and never found.

When, at last, one set of sun,
His two-ages sleep was done,
Then the shepherds to him came,
Telling of his race and name —
How there was a legend old,
Often by their grandsires told,
Of a youth long sought and mourned,
Till to earth the mourners turned.

Epimenides

Epimenides looked round
On the long-unpastured ground,
Saw in place of fleeces white
Bleachèd bones to left and right.
Then his eyes, through seventy years
Strangers to the use of tears,
Overbrimmed, the while he said,
"All my pretty sheep — all dead!"
And, whoever he might meet,
Only these words would repeat.

Nearest things, not greatest, shake,
When from grief's long swoon we wake.

Spinning

DID you, O Daphne, long ago,
Stray with your nibbling sheep
On those far hills I seem to know,
Looming in dreams of sleep?

Did you a little spindle whirl
From morning until night,
Making a thread from fleecy curl
Of their shorn raiment white?

Sometimes, I think me you, Greek girl,
Drawing an endless thread!
A little spindle I, too, whirl—
But it spins song instead!

You wandered, and fine wool you spun,
Happily till the night.
My spinning, too, will not be done
Till fails the lyric light.

The Flower Called Longing

THE Flower called Longing — long ago
On Grecian graves it used to blow
For those who had been doomed to go
To mute Persephone, while Love
Still kept a place for them above,
And dreamed the Vanished knew thereof!

The Flower called Longing — how it spreads,
If one live long to tend the beds
That lap so many precious heads! . . .
If one live overlong, alas,
The Flower called Longing — it shall pass,
And over him sweep but the grass!

At Athens Long Ago

THE sun had touched Cithæron, and the air
Lay violet along the Attic plain.
"The risk is glorious, the hope is fair."
He said — as one that turns not back again.

But they who closed about him would have kept
That soul beloved until the last red ray,
And even he who brought the hemlock wept;
But nowise longer would he brook delay.

At Athens long ago it was — but still
That sun seems gilding his undying phrase
Which bids a failing mortal fear no ill,
Though he has reached the outgate of his days.

"The risk is glorious, the hope is fair" —
Close to the gate I hear, nor falter there.

Wedded With Fire

SAY not, O Swallow, in thy flight
To that dear country of my birth
(Where I shall come no day nor night)
That I have married the Black Earth.

But say that where sands glisten white,
Thou didst behold a builded pyre,
And witnessed how, with all due rite,
I there was wedded unto Fire.

For so went many a hero-sire
Of mine, in time long out of mind,
And had his full and free desire
To tread along the trackless wind.

A little band on some lone shore,
They offered up a hecatomb;
And while dark wine they did outpour
Rose flame to its empyreal home.

Oh, Fire, my bride, will challenge him —
Charos, the foe that Psyche loathes,
Nor leaves within his chamber dim
One shred wherewith my life now clothes!

V

Anima Urbis

YOU, City, by two rivers made an isle,
To whom the sea a tidal tribute pays,
What is it in you that could so beguile
My heart to leave its love of earlier days
Till now its passion seems a fable far,
Dissolved and faded with life's morning star?

For I am lost and strange unease is mine,
If ever I turn back to that old love:
Great Nature is no more to me benign,
I fear her vacant heavens spread above;
The lonely wind-tides drawing through her trees
Are sad to me as Sophoclean seas.

Your casual glimpses of the stars suffice,
Your chary sunsets are of precious sard;
Your yearning towers bloom agate as they rise,
Where men enskied do work — and Heaven keep guard!
And oftentimes I let my thought take flight
Around those shafts half-veiled in misty light.

City, I do not know what charm you wield
That to my spirit has been subtle balm;
From stabbing memories it oft has healed.
Your very tumults can my tumults calm.
Who speaks of guile, of harm your spells can do?
Enchantress City — I am safe with you!

Anima Urbis

Yes, I have been your lover many years.
  Like any lover I your praise could sing,
For this — for that — which so my heart endears.
  And yet, and yet, beyond each several thing,
Like any lover I despair, and say,
"It is your *soul* I've loved so many a day!"

Your soul of many souls well mingled up!
  I sometimes drink it with a giddy joy.
And I here pledge you in a loving-cup
  Service and faith that nothing can destroy.
A conscious soul? O City, can it be —
Since I have so loved you — do you love me?

The Flag

I WALKED at noon down Broadway
And East I turned at Wall,
Crossed Nassau Street and William —
Old Glory over all!
Did you not do the same, today —
And brush the sudden tear away?

The hanging gardens — how they bloom
Far up the builded canyon's gloom!
There never was before a spring
Of such a wondrous blossoming
To make the eye and heart adore! . . .
How beautiful, how beautiful —
How beautiful I never knew before!

The hanging gardens — Oh, how brave
When on the lifting wind they wave!
Nor flaw nor frost can work them wrong,
Perennial is the stock, and strong —
In hardihood 'twas sown of yore! . . .
How beautiful, how beautiful —
How beautiful I never knew before!

The Flag

The hanging gardens — colors three
Are all the raptured eye can see.
No flower exotic here has place,
But all are sprung of native race —
The red, the white, the blue — not more . . .
  How beautiful, how beautiful —
How beautiful I never knew before!

The hanging gardens — and how far
May crimson band and candid star
A looming throw in other skies
O'er lands where kindred bloom shall rise
From broadcast seed that Freedom bore . . .
  How beautiful, how beautiful —
How beautiful I never knew before!

The New Death

"*GREATER than thou art dead; fear not*
But die thou, too." I *can* die, too —
They die who have a record got
That Homer's heroes never knew.

I am of those so very ill
Who touch no more the solid day,
Nor know what time I have to fill,
If soon to go — or longer stay.

So, my free thoughts can wing afar;
And turn they will — and turn again,
Where the red fields of battle are
And Glory cannot count her men!

In daily and in nightly death
I die with those who greatly die,
As though 'twere naught to yield this breath
And turn their faces from the sky!

With most high passion, passing love,
They rush into the Terror's arms —
As though around, beneath, above,
Immortal proof met mortal harms!

And, sometimes, they to me draw near —
  Bright shades of youth for country slain!
I cry, "How went ye without fear,
  As though great joy excluded pain?"

They look at each and other — and
  At me they look, and smile, beside:
"It was — if thou couldst understand —
  Because in the New Death we died!"

"What New Death in the world can be?"
  I cry — they answer not my call.
(But some one soothly says to me,
  "You have been dreaming — that is all.")

"*Greater than thou art dead; fear not*
  But die thou, too." Then, shall I, too,
Though humblest sharer in their lot,
  Know what was that New Death they knew!

O Hard New World

GOOD-BYE! Soon, soon I go, O Hard New World!
I have not time to learn you, nor the will.
The things I loved into the pit you hurled—
Exalted those unlovely and of ill.

I do not say what makes you hard — or know:
Perhaps so much young blood let from your veins,
In late libation to the Gods Below,
That frosty rigor in your nature reigns?

You have your tumults and your titan throbs,
But harsh the elements and base the ends;
And the dark Genius back of you but robs,
While to the wrestler riches it portends.

I would not be the new-born child to-day,
O Hard New World, to walk with you, *your* way!

VI

Sundown And Swallows

EVE of September,
Sundown and swallows,
The last flaming ember
On the world limit dying!
Sundown and swallows,
(Eve of September —
Tomorrow they journey);
In a last airy tourney,
Round and round flying,
Chirping and calling . . .
Now one by one follows
Down the dark chimney-throat fluttering, falling!

Vanished completely
To soft-feathered slumber!
Save one of their number
There, mounting fleetly,
Higher and higher,
Till the fast fading passion
Touches with fire
That venturous pinion,
Alone and aloft in sole mystic dominion

Sundown And Swallows

Sundown and swallows . . .
A symbol I fashion:
So I behold them —
All of my legion,
One by one follows
Where shadows enfold them . . .
A little delaying,
I soon shall be leaving!
My spirit upstaying,
Too exalted for grieving,
Is touched with what light from hesperian region!

The Beckoner

THEY go in companies — the falling leaves,
In the gold silence of the sunset glow;
No wind (that I may feel) their tree bereaves,
They fall as they were beckoned from below!

Yon shining thread of stream through pleasant meads,
No more it loiters, fringing sweets to taste,
As in the spacious summertime, but heeds
A beckoner that bids it seaward haste.

And wild grey covies of the marsh and lake,
Whose flight is set ere fades the morning star,
No moment late their still departure take —
They, too, as they were beckoned, forth and far!

Sign ineluctable that all obey —
And they must journey on — and on beyond!
What beckoner behold they in the way,
What Hermes with a mystic-braided wand?

Oh, I have thought perchance this turning sphere
A staff Caducean divines in space —
Earth, earth herself, in this decrescent year,
A little hastening her goddess pace!

The Beckoner

I, kindred of the Earth and all of hers,
I dream, amid the driftage of the Fall . . .
What if, among these beckoned wanderers,
I waken to the Signal and the Call!

The Urn Of The Year

A LITTLE while and all this golden fire
Shall fall in silver ash and be inurned,
And for the flower in vain shall man inquire,
In mystic salvatory undiscerned;
But in the ash will be a living spark,
And from the seed will bloom escape the dark.

Sleepward

ALL THINGS reach up to take the Year's last gift,
Then slowly sleepward drift.
Be not deceived if some charmed bush or hedge
Laugh out, on Winter's edge,
Bidding you pluck a flower as you go by,
And trust the yet bland sky.
Be not deceived, the sands are well outrun,
The gala-day is done:
There is no fruit can ripen from a flower
That dares the borrowed hour!
To sleep, to sleep, to sleep, and ask no more
To put within your store;
For, if you have not gathered, 'tis too late —
Swings to, Oblivion's gate.

Be not deceived that yester-evening heard
A flock-abandoned bird.
Against the clear, old-ivory West, sharp-limned,
His broken song he hymned:
But sleep now claims his solitary breast
That was the orchard's guest:
The leaves that loved the bird — they, too, asleep,
His little shape will keep.

Sleepward

Earth sleeps in stillness now, and all of hers,
Obedient vanishers,
Into their chosen cubicles withdrawn,
Stir not at any dawn;
Nor any time unless the wild mice dance,
When the round moon enchants,
Upon a floor polished with frosty fire
And then again retire.
No one will fret or strive to keep awake
But will the feast partake
Of sleep — of sleep-on-sleep, while turns the sphere;
Still here — and yet not here!

Who knows, of us, who heard the sleepward call,
If we be waking all?
If just at one pale moment when the chill
Seemed to o'ercome the will,
We sank not to some deeper blest estate
Where suasive dreams await?
Nor may I know, if me such magic keep
I speak these words in sleep!

The Oldest Garner

I

NOW all those ancient garners are heaped high
Through whose warped siding shot the evening sun
In empty summer. Now, the harvest done,
On threshing floors, unbound, the gold sheaves lie;
The fanning mills their droning burden ply,
And fragrant falls of hay the mows o'errun;
And, look! the merry bubble from the tun
Declares not quite have vintage joys gone by.

All fruiteries and granneries — behold,
Full to the eaves! and thankful shalt thou be,
Whether with prayer, O man, or careless mirth.
But, while thy hands a long spell thou mayst fold,
Comes not, sometimes, this quiet thought to thee:
The oldest of all garners is the Earth?

II

Lo, she her thrift is ever harvesting,
By wild unfenced or by the garden croft,
All summer taking tithe unmarked, and oft
She gathers on the very bound of spring;
From when frail seed barks first go voyaging,
(Charmed back to her, howe'er they sail aloft),
To when witch hazel's pallid plumes are doffed,
And, too, she hoards what swollen streams may bring.

The Oldest Garner

Her store a million, thine a tenth, O man!
And all she hath she will most safely keep
The harrying winter through — 'tis but a span.
Her harvests are not dead, but hold new birth,
And shall in beauty rise — after a sleep.
The oldest of all garners is the Earth.

III

I did, myself, too lightly hold the thought
Till this November eve, when dead leaves stir
Around my pathway, and a rainy blur
All cheerful color in a veil has caught.
Now is my theme with darker meaning fraught:
She who outrivals every harvester
At last — not late, she beckons him to her—
He gathered is, with all that he has wrought.

So, year by year, mine own she downward drew,
And took them to herself to closely keep.
What knowest thou, O man? Would that I knew
Such harvests are not dead, but hold new birth,
And shall in beauty rise — after a sleep.
The oldest of all garners is the Earth.

Transition

THANKS, O wise Slave, whose message was so free!
And I would know that, when I cease to be,
I shall give place to something better worth —
Serene and glad — that shall delight this earth!

The place I fill so restlessly, ah, strange!
It shall be filled by great Creative Change;
When I shall sleep, unknowing and unskilled,
With bright and tranquil force it shall be filled.

I would I knew what marvel may arise
To take a morning-world with sweet surprise;
Moves in my place some soul unbodied yet,
Or soul returning, that cannot forget?

Or, but some soulless thing (as Man so counts) —
The rose of joy — a vine that wayward mounts —
Or some great tree that, waxing full of years,
Shall stand precentor of his forest-peers!

Who serves a living use shall never die!
I shall not be turned out of Life — not I!
But, since of beauty has the world such need,
A change into some beauty be my meed!

Voluntary For Uncalendared Easters

To T. S. J. Jr.

SO MANY times have I been dead,
So many times been buried — yet
Each time the winter clod have shed,
And spring's great wonder-world have met.

By inner pang transpierced — and done —
Sit tibi terra levis said —
Just there, the light again I won,
And life-to-life inherited!

"But, now, no more shall I arise!"
Each death I deemed the Great Surcease,
Spring's fire did touch my heart, my eyes,
And fire in me did straight release.

So many times this chanced to me —
So many, many little deaths,
The Last no more than space can be
Between two tremulous-taken breaths!

THE END

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